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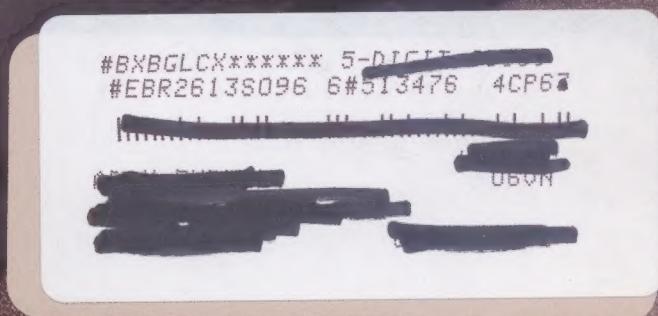
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VIDEO

magazine



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A big picture and big home theater sound with Panasonic's 50-inch wide-screen PT-50WFX5 rear-projection TV and JBL Sound-Effects speakers. Equipment photo by Les Morsillo, skyline by Superstock Inc./Carolyn Schaefer, storm by The Stockmarket/Tom Ives.

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June 1993

Number Six

Have you ever seen satellite TV? If not, you don't know what you're missing! Because satellite TV offers you the ultimate home entertainment feast: excellent audio reception...exceptional video reception...and superior programming choice. Interested?

Getting Started is now easier than ever. Your local professional satellite dealer can help (he's listed in the Yellow Pages under "Satellite Television" or call 1-800-285-5621 for a dealer referral). He'll be able to demonstrate a variety of home satellite systems in different price ranges that meet your particular needs, and work best in your part of the country. There's even a smaller-sized dish that gives you the same quality features at a lower cost. And don't worry. Your home satellite system will be easy-as-pie to operate. All you have to do is just push a button on your remote control.

And choosing your programming is easy, too. For lots of home satellite system owners, HBO Satellite Services is their first stop. You'll have a variety of programming packages that include the most requested channels like CNN, ESPN, TBS, and TNT to choose from. You also get multiplex HBO and Cinemax — three channels of HBO and two channels of Cinemax, each with their own unique schedule and programming mix. You get HBO, HBO2, HBO3, Cinemax, and Cinemax2 — all for the cost of your regular HBO/Cinemax subscription. It's a great value, and a great way to watch TV.

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CHANNEL ONE

It's about sound

Home theater has become one of the hottest buzzwords in home video, rivaled only by multimedia. But there has been a continuing debate in some circles about what components comprise a home theater and how much a person needs to spend to recreate the cinema experience in his or her own living room, den or family room. While it's possible to quibble over whether a laserdisc player, a THX system or a line-doubled front projector is the *sine qua non* for true home theater, two things are certain. First, home theater means a big picture with big surround sound. Second, the experience is more affordable than ever.

In the early years of the home video era, the emphasis was naturally on the picture. As home screens grew larger, brighter and better, the novelty of viewing feature films at home, whenever you wanted to, developed into a multibillion-dollar business. But as George Lucas and other filmmakers point out, sound is half the experience of a successful feature film. Whether you're absorbing that experience in a movie theater or at home, high-quality surround sound is an integral part of a film's emotional punch. It's the essential element that can turn a room with a big TV into a home theater. And today, truly great home theater is increasingly available at a fraction of the price of a new automobile.

This month, in our second annual "Home Theater Special," we show you how to go about the task of planning a home theater. We present a number of home theater systems at various price ranges, we compare and evaluate a wide selection of A/V receivers, and we ask our editors and contributors to pick their favorite laserdiscs. To top off the package, we close with an exclusive — the first hands-on review of JBL's new SoundEffects home theater speaker system.

We first heard this system in a dramatic demonstration at January's Consumer Electronics Show. Starting with basic 27-inch television sound reproduction, JBL technicians gradually added outboard SoundEffects speakers to transform the demo room into a home theater. It's a demonstration the company is encouraging its retailers to conduct in their stores, and we suggest you find a store that will give you this demo or one like it. If you're not yet fully attuned to the concept, we think you'll be impressed by how affordable home theater — a big picture and big sound — can be.

James M. Barry
Editor

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Here's a great way to build a collection of your favorite movies on laserdiscs! Just write in the numbers of the 3 laserdiscs you want for \$1.00 each, plus shipping and handling. In exchange, you simply agree to buy two more laserdiscs in the next year, at regular Club prices (currently as low as \$29.95, plus shipping and handling)—and you may cancel membership at any time after doing so.

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The Godfather Part III	0842302
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Aliens	0360909
Alien 3	★ 1042506
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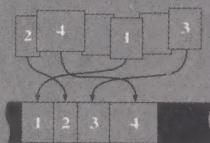
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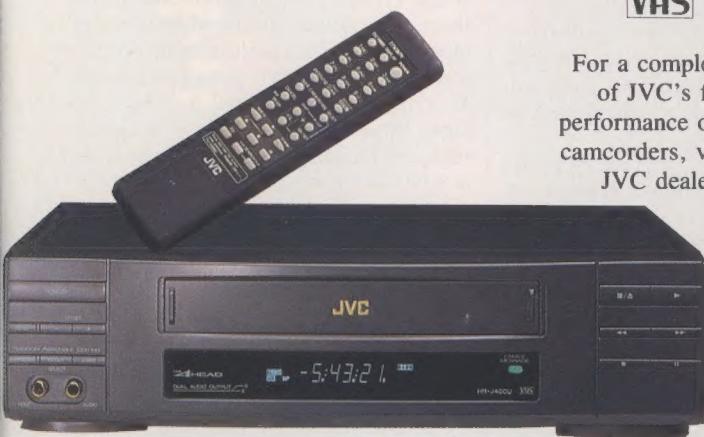
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FEEDBACK

Quick on the trigger

Several recent magazine articles have covered Sony's new CCD-VX3 camcorder, but yours ("The Missing Link," March '93) stands out as a leader in user-oriented equipment evaluations. No other article notes the trigger fader, for example. Your authors obviously understand the steadiness difficulties of non-trigger faders on other small camcorders.

J.W. Bryson
San Francisco, California

Honored musicals

In Bruce Eder's laserdisc review of *An American in Paris* (March '93), he calls it "the second-most-honored musical in movie history (after Minnelli's *Gigi*)." He overlooked *West Side Story*, which I believe is, in fact, the most honored mu-



West Side Story: Rita Moreno dances her way to an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress.

sical in movie history, garnering 10 Academy Awards. If Eder is using another barometer, I'd be interested in knowing what it is.

Harry Banks
Tranquility, New Jersey

Editor's reply: According to Halliwell's Film Guide, *Gigi* won 10 Academy Awards, *West Side Story* won five and *An American in Paris* won four. All three won the Best Picture award.

Combi sound

Your review of the Panasonic LX-900 ("Videotests," March '93) finally explodes the myth that any good laserdisc

player sounds as good as a stand-alone CD player. I listened to the audio performance of several \$1,000 models from Pioneer, Panasonic and Denon and found that none came close to the sound of a well-built \$500 CD player, similar to the Rotel you mention. As far as I'm concerned, laserdisc is for movies only. I'll keep my Sony CD player for music.

Cary Stegall
New York, New York

Making Beta better

Hi8 camcorder manufacturers are missing the boat with their two- and three-chip CCD designs. Yes, it results in purer color rendition, but manufacturers should concentrate on improving their tape format. Camera optics and CCD imagers already outdistance what little Hi8 is capable of. This fragile, dropout-plagued format should be scrapped altogether in favor of a more robust high-resolution format, like ED Beta. A three-chip ED Beta camcorder lavished with an accurate autofocus system would have amateur filmmakers like myself standing in line to buy one.

Tomm Buzzetta
Florissant, Missouri

Drawing blanks

I think you missed the mark in "VHS Tape Tests" (March '93). Other than a single comparison to dropouts in 1982, there are no indications of how today's tapes measure in absolute terms, or how they compare to previous generations. Your report does not tell me if top-line tapes bought a few years ago should be replaced because a visible improvement is now obtainable.

John Vaeth
Derwood, Maryland

Editor's reply: As the article noted, today's tapes are better, but we don't recommend replacing older tapes that still perform well.

Video Magazine welcomes your comments.
Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. Letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to Feedback, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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GAZETTE

Making 'Time'

At first glance, Professor Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* would seem the ideal subject for cinematic interpretation. The book sold 5.5 million copies worldwide after being translated into 30 languages, and spent more than two years on the best-seller lists in America. But theoretical physics—even the kind that's intended for mass consumption—is not the stuff of Hollywood dreams.

"I think we were told a dozen times how impossible it was going to be to make a movie about this," says David Hickman, producer of the theatrical film version of *A Brief History of Time* that just hit video stores nationwide. "It was the unfilmable book." In addition to the difficult subject matter, Hickman and executive producer Gordon L. Freedman had another formidable obstacle to contend with: the book's author.

Professor Hawking was wary of any film project involving his life and work. Disabled with ALS—also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease—Hawking had, as a result of his book, become an international cult figure, the metaphysical guru whose body no longer functioned but whose mind roamed the cosmos exploring the secrets of space and time.

(Hawking is confined to a wheelchair and only speaks with the help of a very sophisticated computer system.) Hawking had turned down numerous offers for a film biography, and had to be convinced that any *Brief History of Time* film would focus on his ideas.

At a recent screening to commemorate the film's release on video, Hawking said his original concern was that the film might emphasize "the more sensational aspects" of his life.

Enter director Errol Morris, whose 1988 film *The Thin Blue Line* pushed the



Master of the Universe: Professor Hawking's ideas are preserved on video with *A Brief History of Time*.

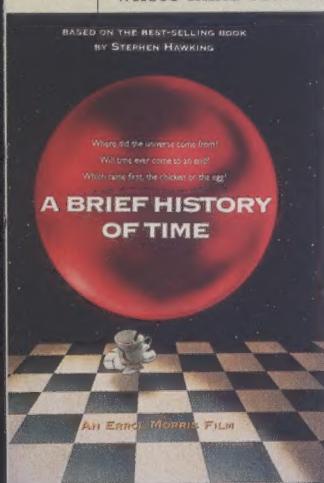
boundaries of the documentary form. Morris convinced Hawking that the right blend of biography and science could reach the mass audience Hawking desired without compromising his ideas. The results speak for themselves: Morris has fashioned an elegant film that addresses eternal questions about the nature of life in an entertaining and accessible way. "What we were after was a sense of wonder about the universe," Freedman says. "That recognition of awe is what Stephen Hawking's all about."

Freedman and Hickman aren't through bringing the professor's message to new audiences. An interactive CD-ROM version of *A Brief History*, that would meld elements of the book and the film with additional scientific material, is also in the works. "Not only will you have the film to help you figure out the book, you'll have the disc to help you figure out the film," says Freedman. Even more permutations are possible: "We still hold the stage rights to the book. I always joked with Stephen that we'd do a musical—I still hold it over his head."

Hooray for Segawood

Follow the red hedgehog footprints to the green dinosaur tracks and you reach the Sega team that is bringing the prehistoric past back to life. It's 1993 in San Carlos, California: Computer programmers, artists, audio engineers and game designers at Sega of America's Multimedia Studio are transforming *Jurassic Park*, the upcoming Steven Spielberg dinosaur movie, into *Jurassic Park*, the Sega CD game.

Although this \$10 million studio is in the heart of Silicon Valley, it's nicknamed Segawood. That's because the Sega Multimedia Studio is the videogame company's research and development center for creating and producing the latest in multimedia entertainment. (Segawood's mascot is Sonic, the blue hedgehog with the red boots, a hot property whose recent sequel *Sonic 2*



screening to commemorate the film's release on video, Hawking said his original concern was that the film might emphasize "the more sensational aspects" of his life.

Enter director Errol Morris, whose 1988 film *The Thin Blue Line* pushed the



Sonic



Have Camcorder,
Will Shoot:

Independent cable producers gathered in New York City recently to stage the first camcorder protest. The issue: a Time Warner lawsuit they say threatens their programs. Each demonstrator brought a camcorder to shoot footage each will broadcast on his or her own cable show.

outgrossed every movie in 1992.)

While the first Sega CD titles were drawn from materials created for other projects, the new Sega discs—like *Jurassic Park*—are being produced from scratch. Initial Sega CD titles relied upon film footage that yielded grainy images when “digitized” for CD-ROM visuals. By generating images and animation with computers and storing them on disk drives, Segawood's game designers are improving the overall visual quality of CD-ROM titles.



Major Player: Breakthroughs in CD-ROM production will take the Sega CD game system to a new level.

Segawood's CD artists and designers used powerful Silicon Graphics workstations to create the *Jurassic Park* CD's animation sequences. Meanwhile, staff audio producers used Segawood's well-equipped studios to conceive and compose prehistoric sounds for the game. Project producers even ventured down to Florida's Lake Okeechobee to sample real-life alligator and bird sounds that were later transformed into the imagined sounds of prehistoric times.

Sega's game gurus predict additional improvements in the quality of multimedia CD games. According to Joe Miller, Sega's senior vice president of product development, “CD-ROM is going through an evolution, the way other [game] software has gone through changes.” He points to the new techniques that Sega's programmers and developers are discovering at the Multimedia Studio. “[We're] learning to use more colors and to better utilize the megabytes on the CD-ROM.” *Jurassic Park*, the Sega CD-ROM, will be available in July. —Marjorie Costello

Let them use stock footage

Your latest video masterpiece is missing something. Maybe it's a shot of Mount Rushmore—hey, it worked for Hitchcock. Perhaps you need tornado footage for your disaster pic, or a flying saucer shot that looks better than something Ed Wood Jr. might do. You don't need a bigger production budget—you need Media-Pedia.

Media-Pedia Video Clips collects royalty-free stock footage you can use wherever or however you like. Instead of having to conjure special effects or write your more ambitious ideas out of your script, you simply buy a tape from these guys and you're up and running. The difference between using Media-Pedia clips and stealing footage off a laserdisc is that Media-Pedia is legal for any and all uses. Up to 15 minutes of stock footage can be added to any single video or multimedia production, and the tapes are available in VHS, S-VHS, Hi8 or 3/4-inch formats.

What kind of footage are we talking about? There's a bit of everything here: nature, technology, people, animals, places, industry, etc. The picture quality is first-rate, and the company plans to

TIMESHIFT

TEN YEARS AGO IN VIDEO MAGAZINE

“‘Baby Laser-disc’ is one possible nickname for the new compact disc (CD). Philips applied laserdisc function and design ideas to the system, which is expected to replace turntables within as little as 10 years...We ex-

pect Sony will soon announce its first laserdisc player, the same format now sold by Magnavox and Pioneer. Pioneer's next step is to design a machine that plays back both CDs and laserdiscs. Word on this development may be forthcoming...After taking a number of **alleged pirates** to court for unlawful theft of signals, HBO has come up with a more efficient way to stop non-subscribers from seeing its programming. It will become the first pay service to use the M/A Com Linkabit scrambling and descrambling unit, a device that HBO says not even the most diligent MIT student or Apple II user can foil.” ■

June 1983



release a continuing series of collections, so you'll never want for new material. An accompanying booklet lists the clips by subject and time, so if you need a shot of a prison laundry that lasts 18 seconds, you can get to it quickly. Media-Pedia can be reached at 617-235-5617.

—Ron Goldberg



Video Clip-Art: Media-Pedia collects stock footage you can use to spice up your home videos.

HOW TO BUY AUDIO/VIDEO UPGRADES

It may be time for an audio/video upgrade. Many people are still watching 10-year-old TV sets, own elderly hi-fi's and five-year old CD players. Amps often degenerate over this time period and speaker cores corrode. TV sets lose picture definition with age as well. Additionally, if your TV is over five years old, it was born before many recent feature advances.

You can start your upgrade with many of your existing components. The best way to determine how well your equipment is operating is to retrofit your system with top-quality audio/video cables. (You'll be amazed at the improvement this can make.) Then visit a PARA dealer and compare some of the new a/v

systems. If you feel that your current receiver is up to snuff, hang onto it. But keep in mind that today's technology

generally offers a lot more features for a lot less money.

For example: ten years ago, a good receiver was around \$500. Today you can purchase a well-equipped a/v receiver for under \$300 — and the performance is substantially better.

Big screen TVs are also more affordable than just a few years ago. Granted, paying \$1500 for a 31-inch CRT isn't peanuts, but considering the amount of time the average American watches TV, it is well worth the investment. Video source material has also improved. New VCRs provide Hi-Fi stereo at an affordable price and the laserdisc player has become an important part of today's a/v system.

PARA is an association of specialty audio/video retailers. To locate a PARA dealer near you, call:

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Professional
Audio/Video
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GAZETTE

Video Flashes

THE DEADLINE for Sony's 1993 Visions of U.S. home video contest is rapidly approaching. This year's judges include Francis Ford Coppola, Tim Allen (star of TV's *Home Improvement*) and Branford Marsalis. Homemade videos up to 20 minutes long will be accepted in five categories: fiction, non-fiction, experimental, music video and a young people's category for videographers 17 and younger. All entries must be produced and submitted on VHS, Beta or 8mm cassettes and are due by June 15. Prizes include an array of Sony camcorders, including the CCD-TR101. For further information or a required entry form, call 213-856-7743, or write to: Visions of U.S., Box 200, Hollywood, CA 90078.

Francis Ford Coppola

IS MULTIMEDIA A HOT TOPIC? You bet it is. According to a speaker at this year's International Tape Association Seminar in Arizona, there are at least 214 professional conferences this year with the word "multimedia" in the title.

DIRECTV, THE DIRECT-broadcast satellite service slated to become available next spring from Hughes and Thomson, may have some orbiting competition if a reported venture of Space Systems/Loral (SS/L) of Palo Alto, California, comes to fruition. SS/L, successor to the former Ford Aerospace operation, announced it will enter the DBS market in 1995 with as many as 480 channels from a high-powered satellite of its own.

THROW TV CHIEFS, COMPUTER scientists and movie executives into a debate about the future of their media and sparks are likely to fly. Here are some soundbites from a recent conference on the business of entertainment that was sponsored by the investment firm Wertheim Schroder and *Variety*.

• "There will be repeat programming ad nauseum. The only thing that will save the networks is that 30 mil-

lion people have arthritis." CBS president Howard Stringer on 500-channel television.

• "The most common appliance in every home requires consulting a written manual, TV Guide, before every use." Nathan Myhrvold, vice president of advanced technology at Microsoft Corp., on the need for an intuitive, onscreen channel navigator.

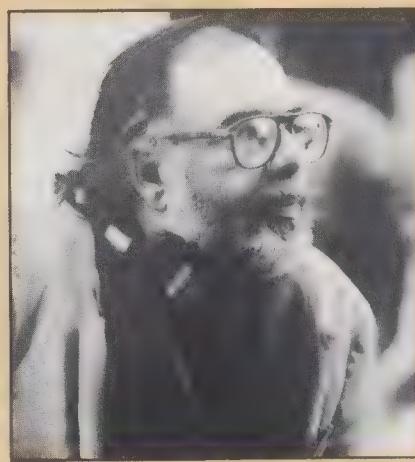
• "Too much technology can be deadening. I don't want to be watching a movie while I'm searching for Grateful Dead tickets." Michael Fuchs, chairman and CEO of HBO, on the impact of 500 channels.

CABLE PRICES are coming down. Shortly after "Cable Scorecard," last month's feature about the impact of the 1992 Cable Act, went to press, the Federal Communications Commission announced plans to cancel recent cable price increases and roll back other hikes since the law was passed.

The ruling, which is still in a comment period, will affect most cable programs, although not those, like HBO, that are sold individually. The proposed rules also open the door for further rate cuts and limits on charges for remote controls and converter boxes.

PHILIPS HAS ANNOUNCED the long-promised, long-awaited full-screen, full-motion video (FMV) cartridge for its CD-I players. The cartridge adds an extra megabyte of memory to the players, all of which can be upgraded. Software developers are now at work on FMV titles, with the cartridge and new titles due to reach consumers in the fall.

WATCH FOR THE NEXT REvision of NewTek's Video Toaster this summer. The Toaster was launched nearly three years ago as an awesome hardware/software combo that brings unsurpassed video special-effects capabilities to Commodore Amiga computers. The new version will include LANC-compatible drivers for controlling all Sony and many Canon camcorders. The company, flush with success in the professional and semipro video fields, is targeting the new Toaster at serious amateurs. ■



Panasonic's AG-3 brings an entirely new dimension to professionally featured video cameras. Never before has a camera this size incorporated so many features typical of larger, professional grade video cameras. Nor has a camera of this quality and size been available to oceanographers, coaches, law enforcement officers...to

SOME PROFESSIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES.

name just a few.

The AG-3 features an imaging system based on a *three*, 1/3-inch CCD technology. Horizontal resolution is 530 lines, while image sensitivity is rated at 1 lux. A 10X manual zoom and a 20X digital zoom provide sharp, certain close ups. EIS (Electrical Image Stabilization) assures a steady

picture even under the most difficult circumstances. A digital time base corrector, digital noise reduction, and digital effects such as snap shot, strobe shot, picture memory, and WIPE & MIX are built-in. The AG-3 is even ready for advanced television with its 16X9 capability.

The AG-3 proves that it's not what the camera looks like that makes it professional. It's what the video looks like.

*Simulated picture

For more information call: 1-800-528-8601 (Upon request, enter product code 12)
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PANASONIC'S
AG-3 S-VHS®
CAMCORDER

Width 5 1/2"

Height 4 13/16"

Depth 9"

Weight (approx.) 1.96lbs

VIDEOTESTS



Room-Shaker: Toshiba's CX32C80 uses a subwoofer and digital processing to achieve big sound.

**Toshiba CX32C80
32-Inch TV**

Price: \$1,799

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
240 lbs.; 45-3/4 x
39-3/8 x 23-1/4 inches

Screen Size:
32 inches diagonally

Speaker Size: main left & right—2-3/4 x 5-1/8 inches, subwoofer—4-3/4 inches

Type of Tuning: frequency synthesis

Method of Tuning: programmable scan on set, scan plus direct access on remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels—2 to 13, A-8 to A-1, A to I, J to W, AA to ZZ, AAA, BBB, 65 to 94, 100 to 125

Remote Control: IR wireless with exposed buttons for cable, VCR, TV, power, recall, TV/video, MTS, mute, volume up and down, channel up and down, channel return, 10-digit keypad, 100, stop/locate, rewind/swap, play/source, FF/PIP on/off, record, pause-still/still-RLS, slow/PIP channel down and TV-VCR/PIP channel up; covered buttons for picture, au-

dio, setup, option, reset, exit, -, +, timer, antenna 1/2, cyclone/woofer and DSP/surround

Inputs: front—S-video/video/stereo audio, rear—S-video/video/stereo audio, video/stereo audio, 2 RF

Outputs: video/stereo audio (selected source), variable-level stereo audio, loop-through RF for cable converter, stereo

VIDEOTEST
685

**TOSHIBA
32-inch
TV set**

Toshiba's TV sets have earned a reputation as good performers—at least one Video Magazine contributor considers the brand his favorite. The CX32C80 is one of the best Toshibas we've seen. It's a console model, built into a cabinet that also holds two video components, typically a VCR and a laserdisc player. The sides of the cabinet conceal stereo speakers and Toshiba's Cyclone ABX subwoofer, although at only 4-3/4 inches, it should really be called a woofer. The subwoofer has its own amplifier and can be turned off, but you'll want to leave it on—it adds warmth and punch to the sound.

HIGHLIGHTS

With the CX32C80, Toshiba combines many of the latest high-end TV features in an attractive cabinet that also holds a VCR and a laserdisc player. It has picture-in-picture with two tuners, so you don't have to connect a VCR to watch two channels at once. It's one of the first of the new sets with closed captioning. The picture is terrific, and a subwoofer and several digital surround-sound modes add sonic kick. We rate it very good to excellent overall, and consider it a good choice for those who want a console-type TV set.



external speakers

Internal Audio Amplifier Power:

10 watts per channel stereo plus 13 watts for subwoofer

Special Features: console cabinet with space for two video sources, digital signal processing for surround sound, subwoofer, closed cap-

tioning, PIP, noise reduction

Absent Features: headphone jack, rear-speaker outputs

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: more than 600 lines

Picture S/N (dB): luminance—56.9, video—55.7, chroma AM—

The CX32C80 offers a host of high-end features, foremost of which is picture-in-picture (PIP). There's even a second tuner, which lets you use PIP to watch two TV channels at once. On most sets with PIP, you have to hook up a VCR and use its tuner to achieve this. You can also watch a TV channel and a video source.

Toshiba's FST picture tube virtually eliminates geometric distortion, which can be an annoying problem with large direct-view sets. The set offers switchable flesh-tone enhancement and noise reduction, plus onscreen menus in English, Spanish or French. The picture menu provides three picture preference settings: factory preset, theater (which dims the picture) and memory (your own settings). The remote control has programmed codes to operate 58 brands of VCRs and 24 brands of cable boxes.

Closed-caption decoders are required on all 13-inch and larger TV sets sold by manufacturers after July 1, and this is the first of the new caption-decoding sets we've tested. The feature is designed for the hearing-impaired, but we think it will appeal to others as well. Just think—you can watch TV while you're talking on the phone without missing a thing! Or catch Leno while your spouse sleeps, without having to mess with headphones.

The closed-caption option on the setup menu lets you choose from two caption channels and two text channels, if they are being broadcast, or if they're on the tape or laserdisc you're watching. Active channels appear in yellow on the menu, inactive ones in cyan. The caption channels display a couple of lines of

continued on page 43

64.1, chroma PM—63.3

79.6 dB

Color Temperature:
7,400 Kelvins

Screen Brightness:
144 footlamberts

Accuracy of Colors:
excellent

Audio Frequency Response: line out—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.1/-1.7 dB; speaker terminals—20 Hz-5 kHz, +0.03/-3 dB, -9.5 dB at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: line—87.4 dB, speaker terminals—

ZENITH VHS VCR

The Zenith VRL4210HF is a straightforward VHS hi-fi VCR that should appeal to those in search of an affordable, no-nonsense deck for home theater, the bedroom or any other application that doesn't demand advanced features. Its feature package includes standards you'll find on almost every new deck, including onscreen programming, indexing and four heads for clean still-frames and slow motion. Camcorder users should probably steer clear, though, because it lacks front-panel inputs, a flying erase head, audio dub and other essential editing features.

With no hidden compartments and only a few very large front controls, the deck has a warm, friendly appearance. It's ideal for those who have trouble finding controls or reading the legends in the dark. The front controls offer only basic tuning and transport operations, and aren't the least bit forbidding. Both the clock and the timer are set through the menu system, with easy-to-understand prompts. (We still feel, despite what Johnny Carson and our former President have said, that setting the clock and timer on a VCR is not difficult.)

The deck includes a unified remote that operates Zenith TVs built after 1981, an auto mark index system with search for up to 99 marks in either direction, digital auto tracking and a mid-mount design, which is intended to reduce picture jitter. The onscreen dis-

HIGHLIGHTS

Home theater places very limited demands on a VCR—all you really need is hi-fi sound and a good picture. The Zenith VRL4210HF delivers both at an attractive price of \$429. It's a simple machine to operate because it lacks fancy features and has no hidden control compartment. The deck includes a universal remote that operates many Zenith TV sets. Picture quality and ease of operation are both very good, while audio quality is good. We rate the deck's overall performance good to very good.

play provides all necessary information about tuning, recording and playback, with an option of keeping the counter on during most operations, but the display on the VCR is not very detailed.

There's really nothing unusual about the deck's operation, except that there are no control hatches to open. All functions besides the basics are included in the menu system. This is a workable arrangement, although it can cause frustration. For example, we wish the input selector had been given its own button instead of being placed in the menu—you have to use the remote if you want to record from a line source. Fortunately, the deck has its conveniences, like auto rewind at the end of a tape and auto eject/power off at the end of rewind. Ease of use is very good.

Picture quality is also very good—quite a commendable achievement for a budget VHS deck. Audio quality is good, about what you'd expect for a deck in this price range. Overall, we rate the VRL4210HF good to very good. Those who are assembling a modestly priced home theater will have a tough time finding better performance without spending hundreds more. ▶

Keep It Simple: For easy operation, the front of Zenith's VRL4210HF uses only a few large buttons.

JUNE 1993 VIDEO 15

SONY

HIGH END OF THE SPECTRUM.

With three CCD chips, one for each primary color, the Sony Handycam® PRO camcorder delivers color separation and reproduction no one chip camcorder can match.

You get 530 lines of camera resolution and Digital Color Noise Reduction. Plus, RC Time Code is recorded directly on your tape for accurate editing.



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And for your complete personal guide to all Sony consumer electronics, we're introducing Sony Style magazine. To receive your copy for \$4.95, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling, call the number above. Visa and MC. Offer expires 11/93.

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HERE'S A FULL SPECTRUM OF AUTHORIZED SONY DEALERS

Zenith VRL4210HF VHS VCR

Preset Method: auto program plus manual channel skip/save
Cable Tuning Range: 4A, A to W, W+1 to W+84, A-5 to A-1
Timer: 8-event/1-year
Special Features: still-frame, slow motion, auto on/play/rewind/eject/off
Price: \$429
Weight & Size (h/w/d): 10 lbs.; 3-1/2 x 14-1/4 x 13-1/2 inches
Jacks: RF and video/stereo audio input and output
Tape Speeds: SP, LP, EP
Video Heads: 4
Cue & Review Search: 5x/9x SP, 5x/15x LP, 15x/21x EP
Fast Forward/Rewind Time: less than 3 min. for T-120
Remote Control: IR wireless with indicators for VCR and TV control mode, and buttons for VCR/Zenith TV control mode, off/on, source, flashback, channel up and down, volume up and down, mute, menu, select up and down, adjust reverse and forward, quit, 10-digit keypad, enter, a.m./p.m., memory, timer, record, stop, pause, search, rewind/search, play, fast forward/search and TV/VCR
Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: index with auto mark and search for up to 99 marks
Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo
Tuning Method: frequency synthesis
Channel Selectors: programmable up/down scan on VCR, scan plus direct access on remote

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MC ALISTER CAMERA Columbus
STEREO VISION Columbus
WELLMAN & GRIFFITH Cleveland
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GLUSKIN'S CAMERA Stockton
HOME MOVIES TO GO Santa Monica
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L.A. AUDIO/VIDEO Los Angeles
MEADOWS CAMERA SHOP Stockton
MISSION HILLS RADIO & TV San Diego
SHERMAN OAKS CAMERA Sherman Oaks
SUPERCO Monterey
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COLORADO
ROBERT WAXMANS Denver
FLORIDA
SARASOTA CAMERA EXCHANGE Sarasota
THE ELECTRONICS SHOP Orlando
GEORGIA
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ADRAY APPLIANCE Detroit
HOME APPLIANCE MART Detroit, Ann Arbor
MINNESOTA
NATIONAL CAMERA Minneapolis
SOUND CENTER Minneapolis
MISSOURI
BROAD BROTHERS St. Louis
MONTANA
ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIFI Great Falls
NEBRASKA
ROCKBROOK CAMERA Omaha
NEW JERSEY
CAMERA STOP Medford, Atlantic City
RANDS CAMERA Toms River
RECORD SHOP Cherry Hill
NEW MEXICO
WEST COAST SOUND Albuquerque
NEW YORK
ROWE PHOTO Rochester
STEREO ADVANTAGE Buffalo



VIDEOTESTS



Triple Threat:
Panasonic's AG-3 is the smallest camcorder to use three light sensors—one for each color—to improve color reproduction.

VIDEOTEST
687

PANASONIC S-VHS-C camcorder

We say "priced for consumers" be-

Panasonic's AG-3 is the smallest camcorder ever made with a three-CCD image sensor. These sensors have been standard equipment on professional camcorders for years, but have only recently appeared on camcorders priced for consumers.

cause the \$3,300 AG-3 is actually a professional camcorder, distributed by Panasonic Broadcast and Television Systems Co. Like Panasonic's other affordable professional products—the AG-1960 S-VHS VCR in particular—we're sure it will find a strong following among consumers. However, you may not find it at your local electronics superstore. Chances are you'll have to go to one of the more than 300 pro video dealers that handle Panasonic professional products.

The AG-3 uses a diffracting dichroic prism to separate the light through the

continued on page 43

Panasonic AG-3 S-VHS-C Camcorder

Price: \$3,300

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
2 lbs. without battery
and cassette; 4-7/8 x
5-5/8 x 9 inches

Image Sensor: three
1/2-inch CCDs, 270,000
gross pixels each

Lens: f/1.6, 10x
(6-60mm) power zoom

Filter Diameter: 37mm

Minimum Focusing
Distance: 1/2 inch

Autofocus:
TTL with auto macro

Minimum Illumination:

34 lux, gain-up off; 7.6
lux, gain-up 8x and
low-light at 12 dB

Iris: auto, manual with
+/- 6-stop range

Auto Fade: hold-down
type to white

Shutter Speeds (sec.):
normal (1/60), 1/100,
1/125, 1/180, 1/250,
1/350, 1/500, 1/725,
1/1,000, 1/2,000,
1/4,000, 1/8,000

White Balance: auto/
sunlight/indoor/push-button
manual

Viewfinder: color LCD
with diopter and on-
screen indicators for
white balance, battery
condition, transport
mode, tape remaining,

counter/memory, index,
head clog, dew, low
battery, low clock bat-
tery, no cassette, tape
end, digital mode, sta-
bilization, manual focus,
snap, shutter speed, iris
gauge, iris value, gain-
up, time, date

VCR Controls: rewind/
search, play, fast for-
ward/search, stop and
pause

Microphone: stereo
electret condenser zoom

Jacks: external mic,
headphones, S-video/
video/stereo audio out,
DC out for RF converter,
5-pin edit control

Tape Speeds: SP, EP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search:
approx. 4x SP, 9x EP

Fast Forward/Rewind
Time: 6-1/2 min. for
TC-30

Remote Pause:
new edit

Program Start
Locator/Index/Cue:
records but does not
read index marks

Audio: linear mono (re-
cord only), hi-fi AFM
stereo

Special Features: still-
frame, insert edit, low-
light boost, LCD view-
finder, image stabilizer,
timebase corrector,
noise reduction, flying
erase head, hardshell
case, digital effects

HIGHLIGHTS

The Panasonic AG-3 is the second prosumer camcorder with a three-CCD image sensor, which produces more accurate, saturated color than camcorders with one-CCD sensors. It offers a wide range of digital effects, an image stabilizer and a color LCD viewfinder. Picture quality is very good to excellent; however, it is less responsive to low light levels than most consumer camcorders. Audio quality is good to very good, and ease of use and overall performance are very good. At \$3,300, it's expensive, but it offers high picture quality and loads of features. It's sure to appeal to serious S-VHS users.

Absent Features:
frame advance, slow
motion, speed play, au-
dio dub, video dub,
titler, remote control

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution:
S-VHS 400 lines,
VHS 240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): un-
weighted luminance—
42.8 SP, 42.5 EP;
weighted luminance—
49.8 SP, 48.9 EP; un-
weighted video—44.4
SP, 42.5 EP; weighted
video—50.5 SP, 49.2
EP; chroma AM—41.6
SP, 40.5 EP; chroma
PM—39.2 SP, 39 EP

Audio Frequency
Response: hi-fi—50
Hz-20 kHz, +0.2/-3 dB,
-11.6 dB at 20 Hz; lin-
ear (record/no play) -3
dB—80 Hz-8 kHz SP,
80 Hz-4 kHz EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range:
81.4 dB

Linear Audio S/N:
41.3 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-
fi—0.3%; linear—0.9%

RATINGS

Picture:
very good/excellent
Audio: good/very good
Ease of Use:
very good
Overall: very good



To Call Them Basic Video is to Call a Porsche® Basic Transportation.

Fasten your seat belt. Samsung's new TVs and VCRs have arrived. On the outside, the essence of sophisticated styling. On the inside, superior engineering. In other words, hardly your basic video.

Our TVs are as beautiful on the ears as on the eyes. Stereo sound with dbx® noise reduction. 181 channel capability. Three audio/video inputs.

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Samsung's new TVs and VCRs. Like the styling and performance of a Porsche, they're in a class of their own.

Test watch one at a dealer near you.

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VIDEOTESTS



Expanding Horizons:
The integral 0.7x wide-angle adapter on Sony's CCD-TR61 lets users fit more people in the picture.

VIDEOTEST
688

SONY 8mm camcorder

Sony's CCD-TR61 solves this problem with an integral 0.7x wide-angle

adapter, similar to those found on some recent Fuji camcorders. A slide switch on the front activates the adapter, which lets you cover about 40 percent more area—a 64-degree angle of view, equivalent to a 32mm lens on a 35mm film camera. When you engage the wide-angle adapter, the lens zooms back automatically to a full wide-angle setting. Unlike many add-on wide-angle adapter lenses, this one causes only a small amount of picture distortion. You'll probably notice it only on horizontal lines near the top and bottom of the picture. There's no visible vignetting, *continued on page 40*

Sony CCD-TR61 8mm Camcorder

Price: \$1,200

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
1.7 lbs. without batteries and cassette; 3-3/4 x 4-1/2 x 7-1/2 inches

Image Sensor:
1/3-inch CCD;
270,000 gross pixels

Lens: f/1.6, 10x
(6.2-62mm) two-speed power zoom with integral 0.7x wide-angle adapter

Filter Diameter: 37mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 1/2 inch at

wide-angle

Autofocus:
TTL with auto macro at wide-angle

Minimum Illumination:
3.3 lux

Iris: auto with auto exposure modes for portrait, sports, high-speed shutter and twilight

Fader: to black or mosaic, trigger-operated

Shutter Speeds (sec.):
normal (1/60), portrait mode—1/60-1/2,000, sports mode—1/60-

1/500, high-speed shutter mode—1/4,000, twilight mode—1/60

White Balance: auto

Viewfinder: electronic with diopter, LED recording/cassette/battery indicator and on-screen indicators for AE mode manual focus, LP play, operating mode, counter, fader, tape remaining, zoom scale, low battery, cassette, lens cover, dew, caution, eject, battery life, DST/time zone number, time zone name, clock battery, date, time

VCR Controls: stop, rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, pause/still, edit search and camera record

Microphone: stereo electret condenser

Jacks: external mic, LANC remote, DC out

to RF converter and video/stereo audio output

Tape Speeds: SP, LP (play only)

Video Heads: 4 (small drum)

Cue & Review Search: 9x forward, 7x reverse

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: approx. 6-1/2 min. for P6-120

Remote Pause: LANC

Remote Control: IR wireless with hold switch and buttons for start/stop, tele, wide, rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop, play, data screen and still

Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo

Special Features: integral wide-angle adapter, four auto exposure modes, auto backlight compensator, still frame, daylight-saving time and time zone adjustment, skip scan, edit search with stop motion in play, advanced synchro edit, insert edit, flying erase head, auto wind noise switch

Absent Features: earphone jack, program start locator/index/cue, titler, white balance lock/manual, A/V inputs

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 240-250 lines
Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video—41.1, weighted video—49.5, chroma AM—41.7, chroma PM—37.6

Audio Frequency Response: 40 Hz-15 kHz, +0.1/-3 dB; -7.1 dB at 20 Hz; -5.3 dB at 20 kHz

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 71.7 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.3%

RATINGS

Picture: good

Audio: good

Ease of Use: very good/excellent

Overall: good/very good

HIGHLIGHTS

We've always liked Sony sub-compacts—they usually have lots of useful features and perform well. The new 8mm CCD-TR61 is no exception. Picture and sound are both good, and its special features—an integral lens cap, a two-speed 10x zoom lens and four auto exposure modes—add versatility and operational ease. A built-in wide-angle adapter lets you get more people in the picture when you're shooting indoors. With good to very good overall performance and a price of \$1,200, the TR61 is a nice, affordable package.





**THE VIDEO MIXER
FOR PEOPLE WITH AN
UNLIMITED IMAGINATION AND
A LIMITED BUDGET.**

Panasonic brings you the digital AV Mixer. With over 100 special effects, you'll find countless ways to make your videos more exciting.

Panasonic unleashes your imagination without tying up your budget.

The AV Mixer, WJ-AVE5, is a true video mixer that's actually affordable. It has a digital synchronizer that combines virtually any 2 NTSC video signals. Creating dissolves, superimposed images, even picture-in-picture special effects is easy. And its powerful memory stores video images so you can produce still freeze frames, mosaic patterns, video paintings and stroboscopic motion. Add 98 digital wipe patterns, choices of 8 different title and background colors, 3 levels of shadowing, 2 levels of edging, a built-in stereo audio mixing board, and the creative possibilities will

seem unlimited.

To make the AV Mixer even more versatile, it has

2 inputs for multiple video sources, a special input for a video camera and 2 outputs for video recorders.

And to make your videos more interesting, from the beginning to "The End", you can add titles with an optional character generator.

To talk to the Panasonic AV Mixer dealer nearest you, call **1-800-365-1515, Ext. 333.**



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Circle 7 on Reader Service Card.

N-E-W PRODUCTS

BY BRIAN CLARK

Panasonic do-it-all deck offers programming choice.

► HOME THEATER VERSATILITY

Panasonic's PV-S4380 S-VHS hi-fi VCR (\$1,099) is packed with features for both home theater and editing uses. Panasonic says new DynAmorphous metal heads improve the video signal-to-noise ratio. Along with the popular Program Director programming remote, the deck also features VCR Plus. Editing features include jog/shuttle, a flying erase head and front audio/video jacks.



► TV/VCR INCLUDES FRONT INPUTS

Samsung's 19-inch CXA1926B TV/VCR (\$599) features index search and an eight-event/one-year timer. The set also includes front-panel inputs, a black matrix picture tube and onscreen displays. (For additional information, circle 104 on the Reader Service Card.)



► PROJECTOR WITH A SCREEN

A built-in monitor sets Fuji's P401 mini video projector (\$799) apart from its predecessors. The three-inch monitor displays a rear-projection image from the same LCD panel that creates the primary image. The P401 projects images from six to 40 inches in size. Stereo speakers are built in, along with a volume control. (For additional information, circle 102 on the Reader Service Card.)

► AUTOMATIC PANHANDLING

Sunpak's APT-200 auto pan-tilt head keeps you in the picture thanks to an infrared remote control. Powered by a six-volt camcorder battery, the head pans 90 degrees horizontally and 20 degrees vertically. The head can sit on a tripod or on a flat surface, and can be programmed to pan continuously. The remote also controls recent Sony-manufactured camcorders. (For additional information, circle 100 on the Reader Service Card.)



► UNIVERSAL APPEAL

Memorex has significantly refined its VR4 (right) and VR3 universal remotes since their debut last fall. Equipment codes have been updated and each now uses one fewer AAA battery; the VR3 needs two, and the VR4, three. Prices have dropped for both as well, with the VR4 and VR3 just \$20 and \$15, respectively. Both models control a TV, VCR and cable box, while the VR4 operates an additional TV, VCR or cable box. (For additional information, circle 101 on the Reader Service Card.)





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The Acoustimass-7 system includes three speakers and a bass module (not shown).

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Stereo Review

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BY BRIAN CLARK

A primer on essentials for shooters considering editing

Unless you've shot enough video to learn what entertains viewers, chances are you've acquired a pile of tape that doesn't do what it's supposed to—bring enjoyment to those who view it. Your viewers, squirming in their seats, learn the true meaning of the phrase "captive audience." But don't fret. You've learned what doesn't work, and that's a valuable lesson not to be forgotten. Where to go from here?

One of the best moves you can make is to buy an editing VCR. This machine will let you construct a new tape from existing footage, without glitches between scenes. It will also let you cover up bad spots with new audio or video. An editing VCR is typically used as the recorder, with a camcorder or another VCR as the player.

What features should you look for in an editing VCR? There are three we consider essential: a flying erase head, a jog/shuttle dial and audio dub. Two other features—video dub and synchro edit—bear consideration.

A VCR is not an editing deck unless it has a flying erase head. Otherwise, it has only a stationary erase head, which erases straight across the tape. Since signals are recorded on the tape diagonally, a stationary erase head leaves a trace of the last few seconds of a previously recorded signal. This leaves a moire (rainbow) pattern, and sometimes a trace of snow, or noise. A flying erase head eliminates these problems because it is on the same drum as the record head, and follows the same path.

A jog/shuttle dial makes editing a great deal easier. The shuttle ring allows you to scan your tape in forward or reverse at speeds that vary depending on how far you turn the ring. The jog dial, resting inside the shuttle ring, allows frame advance in either direction, cutting down the time it takes to find your edit in and out points. Sony's EV-S3000 and EV-S2000 Hi8 VCRs have a shuttle ring, but use buttons for bidirectional frame advance.

On VHS and S-VHS machines, audio dub allows you to replace existing audio on the linear track without disturbing the video or hi-fi audio tracks. During playback you have a choice of

the hi-fi track, the linear track or a mix of both. Let's say you have some vacation footage to which you would like to add some narration or background music. If you just want to add narration, you can do that through the deck's microphone input.

More complex effects can be accomplished with a mixer, like Sima's Sound-Mixer. It has multiple audio inputs with slide level controls for each. Just plug a CD player or other audio source and a microphone into the mixer, and plug the mixer's output into the editing deck. The audio signal is then sent from the mixer to the recorder, where it lands on the linear track.

Performing an audio dub on 8mm or Hi8 is a different story. To do it, the VCR must have

PCM digital audio. There are only a few decks that have this feature, with Sony's Hi8 EV-S3000 ("Video-tests," June '92) among them. On 8mm tape, the analog audio signal is not recorded on a separate track, but underneath the video signal where it can't be separated. (There is a linear audio track on 8mm tape, but it has never been used.) PCM digital audio tracks serve the same purpose as the linear track in VHS, but PCM produces higher quality audio for two reasons—it delivers stereo sound rather than mono, and its digital nature produces a wider frequency response with less noise.

Now that we've covered the three essential features, let's look at two optional ones meriting consideration—video dub and synchro edit.

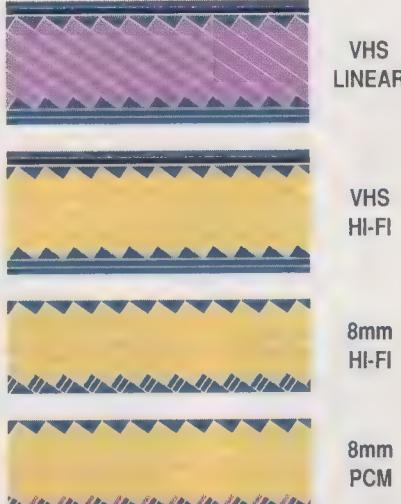
Video dubbing, not available in the Hi8 and 8mm formats, allows you to replace video without affecting the linear

track audio. The hi-fi track is erased along with the video portion of the signal, leaving the linear track. Video dub will enable you to cut video to the beat of music. This is done by recording the music on the VCR along with video black from the camcorder (just turn the camera on with the lens cap attached).

As long as you are monitoring the linear track, you'll be able to hear the music and hit pause on the beat. The cuts won't be perfectly on the beat, but they'll be close enough to give a great effect. Video dub also comes in handy on footage that needs an establishing wide shot, or when you need to break up a longer sequence with some short cuts.

Most manufacturers have an editing protocol—usually called synchro edit—designed to operate two decks or a camcorder and a deck with the push of one button. This makes editing much easier and much more accurate. The user connects the two machines' synchro edit jacks with a special cable. Compatibility, or the ability of the machines to speak to each other, is not a given. Usually, you must have two machines of the same brand. Some brands will work with other brands that are made by the same manufacturer—for example, Hitachi and RCA products work well together—but always check to make sure the deck uses the same editing protocol as your camcorder.

Sony's LANC editing protocol is available on some Sony VCRs, all Sony camcorders and many Canon camcorders, as well as models made by Sony for other brands, such as Ricoh and Yashica. LANC is not an essential feature for an editing VCR, because in a synchro *continued on page 41*



Where's the Sound? Illustration shows the location on VHS and 8mm videotape of linear audio (black) and video (purple) tracks, the combination of hi-fi signals and video (yellow) and 8mm PCM tracks (red).



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The Phantom Tollbooth
2. *Secret Honor*
Swimming to Cambodia
Give 'em Hell, Harry!
3. *Ghostbusters*
Armed and Dangerous
Strange Brew
4. *House Party*
Ricochet
The Hard Way
5. *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*
Gone With the Wind
Gimme Shelter
6. *On Golden Pond*
Rambling Rose
Wall Street
7. *Throw Momma from the Train*
Ordinary People
Back to the Future
8. *Zelly and Me*
Nightbreed
Close Encounters of the Third Kind
9. *Chaplin*
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Driving Miss Daisy
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Send your answers postmarked on or before August 1, to:

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Drawing will be held on August 31, 1993. 100 prizes will be awarded to the *Video Magazine* readers who correctly answer the most questions:

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Winners will be chosen at random from the entries with the most correct answers.

Circle 9 on Reader Service Card.

HANDS ON TEST

BY CLIFF ROTH

VIDEONICS THUMBS UP

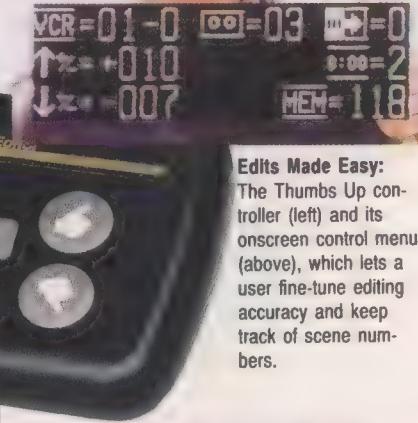
Simplify your edits

With the new Thumbs Up controller, Videonics is trying to make video editing simple enough for anyone—even those who think editing is just too much trouble. But this controller is a lot more sophisticated than its humble appearance suggests. Its features include two types of time code, a video fader/enhancer, the ability to create window dub workprint copies showing time code or index numbers, and a 124-event edit decision list memory. At \$229, it's quite a bargain.

For best results, you need an 8mm or Hi8 camcorder with a LANC (Control L) remote control jack, or a Panasonic professional VCR or camcorder, like the S-VHS AG-1960 or AG-1970, with a five-pin remote jack. Without such a machine as your source deck, you have two choices—either use Thumbs Up's non-automatic "instant edit" technique (a glorified pause control), or make a time-code copy of the tape and edit from that.

pointing up or down to indicate what is or isn't included. Making changes is easy—just press the opposing button to eliminate previous decisions. You can also add video black to the start of a tape automatically.

The initial accuracy of the edits was approximately plus or minus 15 frames (half a second). To improve accuracy, trim adjustments are available for the start and stop points. My edits consistently began about 11 frames early and ended 10 frames late, so I adjusted the trims to compensate. After that, accu-



Edits Made Easy:
The Thumbs Up controller (left) and its onscreen control menu (above), which lets a user fine-tune editing accuracy and keep track of scene numbers.

The controller connects to the camcorder or source deck via an edit control cable. The video signal from the source runs to Thumbs Up, and another video cable runs from Thumbs Up to the recorder. Because it uses infrared signals to control the recording deck, Thumbs Up can use almost any VCR as the recorder. But if the VCR has a flying erase head, edit quality will be better.

For starters, I tested Thumbs Up with a Sony CCD-TR200 Hi8 camcorder and a Toshiba M-758 VHS VCR. With Thumbs Up, entering edit points is as simple as pressing the big thumbs up (scene start) and thumbs down (scene end) buttons while the tape plays, or in pause. When viewing the tape, a big thumb appears in the lower left corner,

racy for the first few edits was amazingly close—within five frames, and sometimes within one or two frames. But after about five edits it started drifting, and plus or minus 15-frame accuracy once again became the rule.

To give Thumbs Up an opportunity to really shine, I tried it with a Ricoh R-108H camcorder (which is identical to Sony's discontinued CCD-V801) and Panasonic's AG-1960 VCR. Since the camcorder has RC time code, I expected improvements in accuracy. Thumbs Up delivered—to the tune of plus or minus three frames accuracy, after I adjusted the trims (plus 10 frames at the beginning and minus seven frames at the

continued on page 42

HOME

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT



theater

Super Sounds From Nakamichi

A versatile surround-sound system that delivers Nakamichi quality and performance.

In this age of diversifying program sources, an audio/video receiver is increasingly regarded as a system control center that must be capable of handling a wide variety of signals from video as well as audio components. Incorporating a large number of auxiliary functions in a receiver, however, involves the danger of sound quality deterioration. Human engineering factors must be considered as well, for there is nothing more intimidating than a massive array of buttons and knobs.

Nakamichi's AV-1 has been designed with the belief that, above all, musical accuracy must not be compromised. Exceptional audio performance is complemented by a sensible selection of control features that enhance system versatility without sacrificing ease of operation.

Early surround decoders in home equipment suffered from poor channel separation — often as little as 3 dB! The

AV-1 employs an advanced digital Dolby® Pro Logic Surround decoder, which improves separation through the use of "steering-logic" circuitry. It emphasizes the differences in output among surround channels based on program content, delivering separation typically in the 26 to 40 dB range. Sound localization, ambience, and movement effects are thus significantly enhanced.

In addition to Dolby Pro Logic, three additional surround modes; Hall, Natural, and Stadium are provided with four user-programmable memory presets. The AV-1 delivers a total of 310 watts through five channels — more than enough for high-quality reproduction at powerful sound levels. A subwoofer line output, as well as pre-out/main-in jacks, are available for system expansion and enhancement. The system remote control is factory programmed to operate other Nakamichi components as well as "learning"

the infrared codes of other products, including VCRs, laserdisc players, and TVs.

No A/V System is complete without the inclusion of compact disc and cassette sources. The Nakamichi MB-2 MusicBank® compact disc player is a remarkable combination of superb quality and user-friendly features, with both single-disc performance and multi-disc convenience. Superior CD reproduction quality is assured by advanced engineering, such as Nakamichi's EL 20-bit D/A converter, an 8-times oversampling digital filter, and 3rd order linear phase Bessel-type analog filters. The transport incorporates the unique MusicBank "1+6" system that allows for the storage and recall of up to 7 discs within an internal stocking mechanism. The result is exceptionally smooth, fast, and quiet disc handling.

To deliver the finest analog recording system for home use, Nakamichi has endowed the DR-1 with its latest generation technologies and advanced features. Together, they provide the user with the upmost in cassette record/play performance, superb operational "feel" and accurate control. Frequency response is guaranteed to be within ± 3 dB from 20-21,000 Hz, even with normal bias tape; And a user-adjustable playback azimuth fine-tune control ensures optimum performance with any tape — even those recorded on other decks.

The AV-1 is the first surround-sound audio/video receiver available from Nakamichi. Along with the MB-1 and DR-1, it is the answer to those who have desired the convenience of a fully integrated A/V system that provides superior music and video soundtrack reproduction, but have refused to make the move with compromise.

For more information, call Nakamichi at 310-538-8150.



Your Connection To The Electronics World

How to get the best home theater system for your audio/video needs

CEDIA is an association that no lover of home electronics can do without. As a national trade association of companies which specialize in planning and installing electronic systems for the home, the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association

(CEDIA) is a reliable source for referrals to capable and reputable design/installation contractors. Contact CEDIA today, and find your way to the perfect media room entertainment set-up for your home.

For free referrals to cus-

tom installation specialists or for more information about the Custom Electronics Design and Installation Association, call 1-800-CEDIA30.

Cover photo courtesy of CEDIA/Hi-Fi Sales, Mesa, Arizona.

Home Theater In A Box

With audio/video and surround sound capabilities, Mitsubishi's HTS-300 is almost a home theater in and of itself.

It's hard to believe that the small black-and white televisions of yesteryear have evolved into the high-impact home theaters of today. But now that home entertainment systems have become a force to reckon with, companies are taking steps to ensure that top-notch audio works hand-in-hand with the high-resolution images emanating from today's best televisions. In effect, A/V receivers and surround sound processors have become vital elements in home theater systems, and, while there are many systems that deliver the goods, Mitsubishi may have just changed all the rules with their latest — the HTS-300.

More than just your average A/V receiver, the HTS-300 is a Dolby Pro Logic Surround Sound unit that is capable of operating every home theater function, including audio recording, camcorder playback, and surround sound adjustments. It also offers the finest in video performance options, including a two-dimensional digital dynamic comb filter that can vastly increase the performance levels of any video component routed through it. The HTS-300 never combines signal components, virtually eliminating cross color and dot crawl distortions.

In addition to its impressive video adjustments (including the ability to accommodate S-VHS resolution), the HTS-300 delivers the dynamics of sound purity without a hitch. A highly advanced circuit cancels hazardous frequencies without affecting the original harmonics and a three-position high-cut filter provides the capability to reproduce every last cycle up to 20 kHz and beyond. Every sound you can imagine pouring out of your home theater system comes across with a brilliant edge. Moreover, with the ability to provide compact disc playback and FM selection, the HTS-300 can switch from a home theater manager to a music-playing machine immediately.

The HTS-300's amplifier section masters a five-channel mode power output,

which includes two main stereo channels (100W x 2), a center channel of 100 watts, and a surround channel (50W x 2). The environment settings which are incorporated into the unit include Stadium, Club, and Theater, the latter of which converts your living room into a full-fledged movie house.

The HTS-300's front panel features

inputs for efficient hook-up. Six rear-panel jacks are also featured, as is a headphone jack, for those film fanatics who like to hear their soundtracks up close and personal.

Along with the array of audio and video capabilities, the HTS-300 is also easy to use. Incorporating Mitsubishi's ViewPoint on-screen menu system, the HTS-300 shows operators concise and clear instruction windows and walks them through both set up and operation in a plain, forthright manner. In other words, Mitsubishi's home theater boombox means business.

As part of any home theater system, the HTS-300 is a powerful processor that will improve all aspects of the presentation.



Going Wide

Panasonic pleases fans of widescreen with a 50-inch model.

Now that VCRs have conquered the family household, and home theaters are gearing up to do the same, manufacturers are getting ready to unleash their widescreen televisions on the film-loving public. Long regarded as the missing link to the perfect home theater, widescreen TVs, or 16:9 monitor/receivers, provide users with a viewing palette that strongly resembles that of a movie screen. The dimensions are the same, as are the dynamics; the only difference is that you get to watch your favorite films in the comfort of your own home.

Panasonic has beaten all contenders

to the punch with the CinemaVision Projection TV (PT-50WXF5), expected to be the first such set in the U.S. The PT-50WXF5 features a 50-inch diagonal screen, but even more important, it ensures a sharp, vivid picture which incorporates 16:9 aspect ratio technology. The aspect ratio (proportion of image width to height) of a conventional television is a mere 4:3.

The widescreen format has been in high demand, as is evidenced by the growing number of videocassettes and laserdisks that are available in the cinematic letterbox format. Even some cable television stations are getting into the

action by broadcasting transmissions for the 16:9 format. CinemaVision enhances the theater effect even further by expanding the image to fill the entire screen, eliminating the obtrusive black spaces above and below the screen. However, for all its technological wizardry and widescreen capabilities, the PT-50WXF5 can also handle conventional signal source transmissions.

A popular feature in all televisions, Picture-in-Picture is also found here. Additionally, the unit features Picture-Outside-Picture, which, when showing conventional 4:3 programming, displays the inset picture within the available space on the side of the main projected image. Both functions work on twin-tuner technology.

Other elements that add to the allure of the PT-50WXF5 include favorite channel memory scanning, front-mounted A/V inputs, and a new icon menu control system, which uses graphics to make media manipulation faster than ever. A special feature enables users to move the main picture to any position on the screen.

It seems as if the future of television technology has arrived, and with the PT-50WXF5, retailing at \$5499.99, Panasonic has an enviable leg-up on the competition.



Instant Success

Instant Replay debuts new VCR/standards converter.

Instant Replay, an American company based in Miami, Florida, has specialized in the development and manufacture of multi-system VCRs for two decades. They have developed benchmark products that have addressed the incompatibility of various international

broadcast standards. Instant Replay was the first company to break the video standards barrier with the introduction of the Image Translator VCR. This was the first VCR to play foreign system videotapes on American TV sets. This gave consumers and businesses global access to video.

Earlier this year, Instant Replay introduced the MV2000, the first in a new line of industrial quality VCR/standards converters. Bi-directional (NTSC to foreign systems, foreign systems to NTSC) capability con-

verts across all major broadcast systems. The user can copy NTSC (the American system) from foreign systems or vice-versa. The MV2000 will record a converted copy from an external source. All conversion capabilities provide excellent color reproduction and picture detail. Motion is smooth in action scenes, and even critical sports footage appears frame accurate.

Additional digital technology provides a number of sophisticated features not previously associated with standards converter technology. Digital Still Frame, Slow Motion, and Search provide noiseless special effects. A jog/shuttle remote control and video indexing provide quick access to specific segments.

The unit incorporates several international capabilities for use overseas. It has an array of tuners and an auto multi-voltage power supply for the international traveller. Hi-Fi audio completes the package of valuable features. All of these capabilities are housed in a metal cabinet incorporating a sleek industrial design with soft touch logic controls. This is truly an unprecedented value in an unprecedented package.

For more information, call Instant Replay at 1-800-749-8779.





Speak Up With Sony

Liven up your living room with new components from Sony.

While you may have the best home theater set-up on the block, you're not going to get very far by way of impressing your friends if you don't showcase a set of speakers that truly packs a wallop. When it comes to home theater sound, speakers that have been custom-built to play film and television soundtracks play a vital role in your home theater success story.

That's why Sony has introduced the new SA-VA3 to home theater owners who demand only the best when it comes to entertainment audio. Dubbed as "the first completely self-contained home theater sound system," the SA-VA3 features internal Dolby Pro Logic decoding and, believe it or not, a remote control for system operation. No other audio/video speaker system can currently boast this capability.

In order to get the full effect of cars screeching, bullets zooming, and explosions, well, exploding, Sony has packed the SA-VA3 with two surround sound (rear) speakers, which produce a power output of 25W. Two front speakers deliver 35 Watts each, while a built-in center channel yields 30. A 50W subwoofer is also included so that each and every rumble that rolls across your home theater soundtrack is experienced in all its bass-driven glory.

Priced at under \$1000, the tri-amplified SA-VA3 is an A/V system that no home theater can do without, that is unless high-

power and easy set-up is not your style. If you're ready to upgrade your set-up to the entertainment arsenal it was meant to be, Sony is on-hand to heed your call.

For playing those favorite movies on disc, Sony also presents consumers with the perfect complement to the SA-VA3, the MDP-600 AV laserdisc multidisc player. Displaying a crystal-clear picture quality, made possible by tri-digital video processing circuitry, the MDP-600 prominently features a digital time base corrector, 3-line digital comb filter, and digital dropout compensation. As laserdiscs continue to grow in popularity, more and more home theater users are choosing them as their viewing format of choice.

Quick start/quick reverse is also available on Sony's newest player, as is auto reverse play, which eliminates the need for viewers to get up and change the laserdisc just when the action's getting good. Other amenities include S-Video outputs, optical digital audio output, dual-mode shuttle control, and a high-density linear convertor for outstanding audio. The MDP-600 also includes a mic input with volume control and echo for those who want to experiment with the growing karaoke phenomenon.

Together, the SA-VA3 speaker system and MDP-600 AV laserdisc player give all the sights and sounds a home theater enthusiast could ever want.



Govern Your Sound

Polaris Industries offers home theater owners the ideal sound solution.



For maximum management of home theater audio, Polaris Industries introduces the AudioComp, an audio compression unit utilized for limiting the dynamic range of stereo or mono sources. Designed to limit the range of offending transitions in audio, the AudioComp acts as an efficient sound governor that is capable of maintaining audio at a constant level. Dynamic audio range can be adjusted via a compression range adjustment, which also allows the listener to maintain a pleasant listening level. Moreover, the compression range adjustment lets you open the range for more noticeable audio transitions.

With the AudioComp, you no longer have to worry about irritating popping or booming noises between television programs, movies or even loud commercials. Crystal-clear sound is the modus operandi for Polaris Industries' audio compression unit.

The AudioComp complements a full line of A/V products made in the USA by Polaris Industries, and it serves as a perfect companion-piece for the videographer wanting to smooth-out studio noises on audio tracks. The Atlanta-based company has been a manufacturer and distributor of high-quality professional and consumer products since 1983. For more information about the AudioComp, request a catalog by calling Polaris Industries at (800) 752-3571.

A Taste of Home Theater

ACT II MOVIETIME
TUBS brings the snack counter into your kitchen.

Just as no theater visit is complete without a tub of hot buttered popcorn, no home theater is complete without the tasty snack as well. With butter-flavored ACT II MOVIETIME TUBS, available through Assured Promotions Services (APS), you'll bring the smells and tastes of movie popcorn right into your living room — packaged in an authentic theater-style tub.

ACT II MOVIETIME TUBS are easy to make — just pop the tub into the microwave and you're ready to dim the lights and enjoy a "real" home theater experience. In addition to tasting great, the patented tub pops nearly 100 percent of the kernels, plus it releases that great movie-style popcorn aroma.

For more information on completing the home theater experience, call APS at 1-800-331-8552.



The Power of Positive Thinking

Bose's powered loudspeakers make a sound investment.



While great speaker systems are considered a must for any home theater system, Bose has one-upped the ante with their acclaimed powered units based in the Acoustimass speaker line. Designed for use with the company's unique Lifestyle system, the Acoustimass 5 Series II offers consumers the benefits of compact size (the cube arrays are 20 percent smaller than the original Acoustimass 5, to be exact) combined with sheer power. Each cube speaker array is magnetically shielded and measures 6 3/8" H x 3 1/8" W x 4 3/4" D, while the bass module, which contains three built-in amplifiers in a bi-amplification mode, measures in at a mere 20 x 9 x 12 inches.

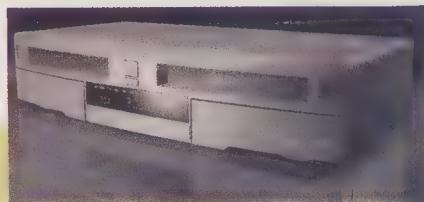
The system has been designed to provide pure sound, enhanced bass, and lower distortion. Due to Acoustimass technology, the bulkiest part of the loudspeaker, the woofer, is separated from the rest of the system, while the high and mid-range frequency drivers are set in tiny, unobtrusive enclosures. One of the most positive assets of the Acoustimass system is the unique acoustic filtering action the bass module employs. Because

of this process, the unit is free from audible high-frequency distortion components, and the illusion that all the sound is emanating from two small cube speakers, rather than in conjunction with a hidden subwoofer, is conveyed in full force.

One 100-watt amplifier powers the bass module itself while two 50-watt amplifiers power the left and right high and mid-range channels. Active electronic equalization, incorporated in the amplifiers, provides accurate tonal balance, and a patented dynamic equalization circuitry fosters deep bass, even at low background volume levels. This means that you no longer have to raise your home theater to ear-splitting volume levels in order to get the full effect of slam-bang movie action. Automatic protection has been incorporated into the Acoustimass 5 Series II, in order to prevent damage from signal overloads.

Customized set-up is possible through the cube speakers, which can rotate nearly 360 degrees. Utilize this feature to your benefit in order to create the perfect, true-to-life, stereo sound image that best fits the size of your entertainment domain.

For more details, call 1-800-444-BOSE.



Make The Intelligent Choice

**Vista
International's
dual-deck VCR
doubles your
video pleasure
for only \$499.**

Vista International puts the dual-deck VCR firmly on the map of the video landscape with the **Intelestar**. Configured in a VCR/VCP combination, the **Intelestar** utilizes one deck as a recorder and the other as a playback device. This makes

the **Intelestar** unit an adventurous recording unit that makes dual-cassette experimentation a breeze.

For a smart product of this nature, efficiency is a must, and the **Intelestar** delivers features such as jet search, automatic rewind, and digital auto tracking that make dual operation easy. A VHS index search system (VISS) enables you to locate the beginning of any recording made on the **Intelestar**. By initiating VISS, a specified tape segment can be found and playback can start rolling automatically.

Front panel jacks are

available for audio and video purposes, so that the videographer in you can take the free and easy path to editing. The **Intelestar** provides you with the option of working with either 8mm or VHS formats. Other features which make the DDV-500 a dual deck to reckon with include 181 channel cable ready tuner, an auto programming channel memory, and an 8 event/1 month programmable on-screen timer with every day programming.

Intelligent copying can simply be achieved with the press of one button (the "Intele Copy" button to be

exact). When automatic recording is activated, a built-in video stabilizing unit will also be activated, ensuring a clear copy from prerecorded tapes.

HQ High Quality picture enhancement is incorporated within the unit's circuitry, adding to the exceptional home theater atmosphere. With the **Intelestar**, movies that are enjoyed in your home theater set-up can be viewed in a dazzling array of color.

Check out Vista International's **Intelestar**, and immediately double your pleasure. For more information, call 602-829-8110.

The Great Indoors

Panasonic Broadcast's projector makes home-movie viewing a treat.

There's just nothing like watching your favorite show or movie on a screen that spans up to 120 inches (measured diagonally) within the comfort of your own home. And if anyone is carrying the torch for the front video projection market, it's Panasonic Broadcast, who is continuing to wow home theater lovers with their versatile PT-B1010U/UF unit (\$9000 suggested retail price). Whether it's 120-inch epics you desire, or 80-inch classics, Panasonic Broadcast's exciting projector is bound to pique your taste for high-quality home theater.

Most anyone who owns a video projector demands crisp, clear resolution that doesn't obscure any moment of the movie action. The PT-B1010U/UF offers a vivid 700 lumens output at white peak, a superb 1100-line resolution for RGB, and an 800-line resolution for video. Distracting reflections are eliminated through a direct optical coupling system, while the three CRTs and their lenses are optically coupled by a silicon gel that fosters the best picture possible. With Panasonic Broadcast's projector, problems with brightness levels will be virtually non-existent.

When combined with the company's ET-100DS Advanced Digital Scan Converter, IDTV (improved definition television) is made possible, while HDTV images are capable of being beamed in at 33.75 kHz whenever the source material becomes available. Precise picture adjustment is made possible, right up to the screen corners, due to a digital convergence adjustment circuit.

The PT-B1010U/UF offers variety in the sources that may be connected, featuring a three-input capability for interfacing to S-Video via a mini DIN 4-pin connector. Interfacing to analog RGB from computers and cameras through BNC connectors and line sources is also available, while separate settings for S-Video, RGB, and line input sources are stored in memory recall.

When it comes to viewing shows during leisure-time, popcorn may be a must, but even more important is the remote control. The PTB1010U/UF comes with a wireless remote with a rear compartment that holds controls for digital convergence, color temperature selector, and installation controls.

This system is perfect for your adventure through The Great Indoors.

Call 201-348-7000 for more information.



Samsung's Video Centerpiece

Samsung's 27" television makes a solid heart for any home theater.

No matter how powerful your home theater has become, without the proper television, you might as well take your business to the local cineplex. While great sound and easy operation are undeniably vital elements in a home theater, it's a safe bet that it will be your monitor/receiver that's going to be the defining factor in your set-up. One model that is making waves in the home theater market is the TXB2725 27" color monitor/receiver (\$670) from Samsung, a sleek and affordable unit which delivers high-performance and easy operation for a variety of applications.

The TXB2725 showcases a convex curved screen that stretches from one side of the television set to the other. Its attractive aero-look will be wowing style-watchers for years to come. A quick-start, in-line

gun with slotted mask and black matrix picture tube is also featured in order to ensure a first-rate picture, while a comb filter is included for higher resolution.

Component or camcorder hook-up to the TXB2725 is made simple due to a virtually seamless front panel which comes equipped with an audio/video and S-Video jack input. More A/V and S-Video jacks are featured on the rear of the unit (including a variable audio output jack) for further attachment of auxiliary items.

Top-notch stereo sound comes from a set of speakers (1.5 watts RMS). The television utilizes an MTS decoder for stereo and SAP reception, and dbx noise reduction is on-hand so that movie soundtracks can be heard the way they were meant to be heard. Other features include a closed-caption decoder and an on-screen multi-



mode display for channel, time, and picture controls. A 33-key infrared remote control comes standard with the 27" (W) x 24 1/2" (H) x 19 7/8" (D) monitor/receiver.

The TXB2725 is showcased with other products in the Samsung television line, including the 20-inch TXB2025 (\$430) and the 31-inch TXB3115 (\$1470).

AudioQuest Brings It All Home

Although unseen and often forgotten, cables can make or break the home theater.



Like it or not, your home theater system isn't living up to its full potential if all the cables are not in tip-top shape. That's why AudioQuest is producing a vast array of high-quality cables specifically made for both the audio and video applications of the home theater.

With their wide variety of products,

AudioQuest seeks to conquer similar problems associated with all cables, problems that, more often than not, are caused by the sole reason of incompetence. No matter what application you are looking to safeguard against, you can be sure that AudioQuest will be ready to pave the way towards A/V brilliance — at a price that's right.

AudioQuest believes that the difference between a large-sized television and a home theater is the audio portion and its ability to convey emotion. For masterful audio operation, AudioQuest makes the Ruby (\$95/meter) and the Quartz (\$160/meter) cables, both of which are constructed with Hyperlitz precision. The Hyperlitz construction method puts a stop to sound distortions which can be caused by strand or magnetic interaction.

Video brilliance can be achieved with AudioQuest's Video Z (\$75/meter) or

Video Pro (\$150/meter) cables. The Video Z is made of FPC-6 (functionally perfect copper), and features a welded connector rather than a soldered one. This eliminates joints between the wire and plug, making for a better picture. The Video Pro is made of silver, causing it to be a highly-efficient conductor and fostering incredibly detailed on-screen images.

Other video cables which can increase your home theater's performance considerably are the Video X and the Video S/X, both of which use Teflon insulated solid OFHC copper conductors in a symmetrical arrangement. The Video S/X is made up of two very high quality video cables positioned side-by-side and connected to a gold plated "S" connector.

An additional S-Video cable that is available from AudioQuest is the Video S/Pro. Constructed of solid FPS silver, it's really just two very high-quality video cables placed side-by-side and connected to a gold-plated "S" connector.

For a complementary copy of AudioQuest's "Cable Design" booklet, call 714-498-2770 or write P.O. Box 3060, San Clemente, CA 92674.

VIDEO SHOWCASE

The Finishing Touch



New ACT II MOVETIME TUBS Complete the Home Theater Experience.

You wouldn't sit through a theatrical blockbuster without a Tub of Movie popcorn — so why do it in your home theater?

Now you don't have to with the new butter-flavored ACT II MOVETIME TUBS, available through Assured Promotion Services (APS). These authentic theater-style tubs prepare a steaming cinematic snack in minutes — simply place the whole tub in your microwave and get ready to settle in for a "real" home theater experience.

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For more information on how to add the finishing touch to your home theater, call APS at 1-800-331-8552.

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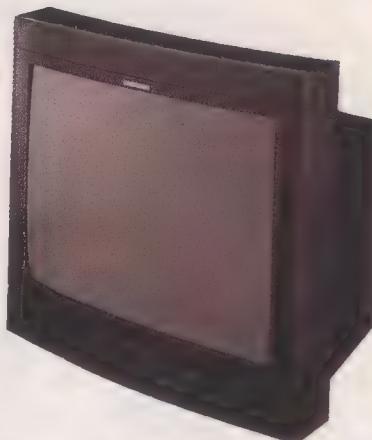
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Samsung's Video Centerpiece

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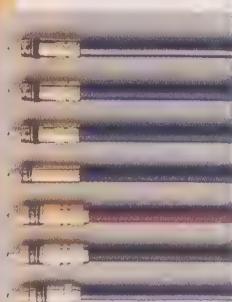
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MOVETIME TUBS
Complete the Home
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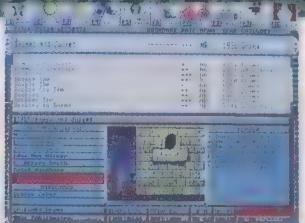


The Monterey satellite receiver's unique four-way audio/video switcher lets you easily select from a host of satellite TV options or as many as three other audio/video alternatives — and from any room in the house. Your VCR, camcorder or CD player can be on-line and entertainment-ready at all times. And with the receiver's digital color P-I-P functions, you can toggle on-screen between any two of these inputs at once. What's more, several Monterey models offer the best in satellite sound in digital or analog stereo, and with Dolby surround sound and dynamic noise reduction. The Monterey is the essential control center to the ultimate home entertainment experience.

For more information and location of the Chaparral dealer nearest you, call: (408) 435-1530

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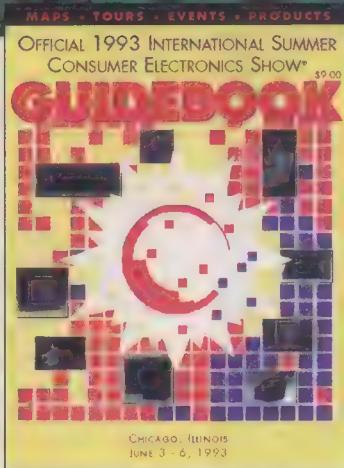
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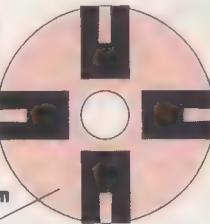
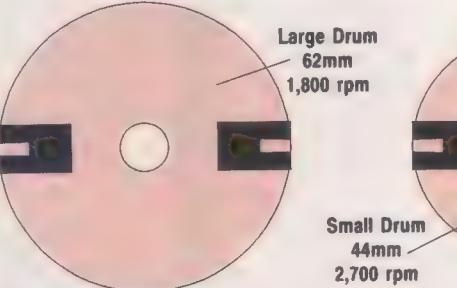
It's for this reason that professional VCRs and camcorders use the larger drum and offer single-speed recording with wide heads. Plus, the pros iron out jitter and timebase problems with timebase correctors.

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

Preventing picture bending & avoiding camcorder damage

Q Why does a third-generation copy from my S-VHS master tape bend in entire sections? For example, if the picture is of a tree trunk, the middle section of the trunk slides out from the rest of the tree. I don't notice this bending problem while making the second-generation copy. I use a Panasonic PV-S4990 VCR and an RCA CC360 camcorder.

Bob Osborne
Ashtabula, Ohio



A The problem is caused by the difference in the diameter of the head drums used in the VCR and camcorder, amplified by the tighter tape wrap used with the smaller drum. A VHS VCR employs a head drum 62mm in diameter, while the camcorder saves space by using a 44mm drum fitted with four heads instead of two, and revolving at a faster 2,700 rpm. The small drum's technical drawbacks include increased jitter and timebase error, and greater stress on the tape due to a more complicated tape path.

As long as a tape is played back by the same VCR or camcorder that made it, you shouldn't have any problems because the stresses are the same. But tapes made with a small drum and played on a standard drum will exhibit bending in vertical lines, often at two or more places. Depending on the number of times you copy a tape and the machines you use as player and recorder, these problems can become magnified to the point where a third-generation tape is unviewable.

let it run for two or three hours, it will get quite hot. Most of the heat generated in a VCR comes from its AC transformer. With camcorders, the AC adapter is a separate component, attached to the camcorder with a cord.

As for metal cabinets, you'll usually find them on expensive camcorders intended for professional or industrial use. There's no argument that metal is stronger and more durable. But it's much more expensive to make metal cabinets. Plastic cabinets are also lighter than metal, a fact consumers appreciate as camcorders continue to shrink.

Camcorder instruction manuals usually warn about the solvent properties of acetone, lighter fluid and the like. Insect spray is only one among dozens of substances that can cause problems. The only safeguard is never to let any fluids come in contact with your camcorder. Not only can they damage the chassis, controls and lens, they can invade the mechanism and short out the circuitry.

Video Magazine welcomes your questions. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. All letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address queries to Q & A, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

Q & A

Q When a VCR operates, the cabinet gets hot. But with a camcorder, there's almost no heat, even though it doesn't have any vents. Why is this? Also, why do all camcorders have plastic cabinets? Plastic is easy to dent, scratch or crack — wouldn't metal be better? While camping, I accidentally smeared my camcorder with some insect repellent that was on my hands. The plastic cabinet actually melted.

Myron Shulman
Brooklyn, New York

A Camcorders are rarely used for more than 15 minutes at a time, unlike VCRs, which sometimes run for eight hours at a stretch. If you hook up a camcorder to the AC adapter and

Q I have a Sony FDL-310 portable TV set with a three-inch LCD screen. I want to use it as a monitor for my Sony CCD-F77 camcorder. There are two sockets on the side of the set. What type of cable do I need to be able to hook the camcorder up to my TV set, and where can I find it?

James Larsen
Norcross, Georgia

A You have a choice. Either connect the RF modulator provided with your camcorder to the TV set's external antenna input mini-jack (on top of the TV, near the antenna), or use the camcorder's direct audio/video input mini-jack, which is on the left side, between the external power input jack and the headphone jack.

Both hookups require special cables. The former requires that the TV set be tuned to Channel 3 or 4. This cable has an F-connector at one end and a mini-plug on the other.

But the direct audio/video hookup offers advantages. First, there's no need to tune the TV set to Channel 3 or 4. Second, the signal will be slightly cleaner than the RF signal, although the difference will be hard to detect on a three-inch LCD screen. It requires a cable with two RCA plugs on one end and a stereo mini-plug on the other. Both cables can be difficult to find. Call 1-800-222-SONY for assistance in finding a dealer that stocks them.

Q In the movie *Patriot Games*, what appears to be a Sony Video Walkman is used to peer under a door frame, using a small pencil-sized camera. Does this camera really exist, or was it just a prop? If it does exist, where can I purchase one?

David Ashcroft
Lawndale, California

A While some Video Walkmans come with a camera input, the only camera Sony offers that plugs into it is far from pencil-sized. Cameras with barrels the diameter of a pencil do exist, but are extremely expensive. They're often used for laparoscopic surgery, where their size makes it possible for them to be introduced into the human body through an

incision or orifice to perform visual diagnosis and surgery (with miniaturized, remotely controlled instruments).

Slightly larger cameras (about one-half inch in diameter) have found favor with video journalists and law enforcement agencies, where they have been concealed inside lamps, bookcases, baseball caps and tote bags — any place their presence is likely to go unnoticed.

Directly connecting a miniature camera to a Video Walkman, however, would require a specialized interface that matches the video capabilities and voltages of the VCR with the unique requirements of the camera itself. No such product currently exists, although it could be engineered.

Q I'm interested in buying a wireless transmitter to send audio and video from a camera in a remote location to a VCR several hundred feet away. It needs to be battery-operated. Anything available that's reasonably priced?

Bob Jackson
Tucson, Arizona

A Some years ago, there was a spate of wireless audio/video transmitters that sold for \$50 or less. They operated from 12-volt DC power sources, and transmitted a UHF signal which could be received on a TV tuned to Channel 14 or 15. But the FCC banned all such devices. A more recent round of UHF transmitters, such as Recoton's Room Service, operate on a legal UHF frequency which is converted (through a separate receiver) into a standard Channel 3/4 RF signal for reception by the VCR or TV. Unfortunately, this type of device operates from AC only, as do most competing models. And while the signal strength is usually adequate to transmit a signal from one room to another, audio and video quality doesn't hold up beyond about 100 feet, depending on intervening structures and other interference.

One company that might be able to meet your need is Super Circuits in Austin, Texas (512-335-9777). It carries RF video transmitters, as well as several color and black-and-white microcameras, suitable for concealing in remote-controlled model aircraft and cars.

Q My new Mitsubishi HS-U55 has the usual Channel 3/4 RF switch on the back like other VCRs, but it also has a tiny off switch. What's the purpose of this switch, and why isn't it on other VCRs?

R. J. Carruthers
San Diego, California

A The Channel 3/4 RF modulator has been a standard feature on every tuner-equipped VCR. It's really a tiny TV transmitter, designed to convert the audio/video signals coming out of your VCR into a low-powered radio-frequency signal which can be received by your TV set on Channel 3 or 4.

However, many of today's TV sets can receive their audio and video signals directly from the VCR using patch cords fitted with RCA or S-video connectors. Since the RF modulator isn't needed in this case, disabling it through the addition of a small switch is a good idea. This prevents the signal from a live but unused RF modulator from interfering with other signals. This interference often degrades the picture.

To my knowledge, this RF off switch has only shown up on selected Mitsubishi VCRs. It's a good idea though, one I'd like to see picked up by other manufacturers.

Q In one of your columns, you speculated on when a 40-minute VHS-C tape would be available. But while traveling in Europe, I purchased several 45-minute EC-45 VHS-C tapes. Why are they sold over there and not in the U.S.?

Bob Breven
New York, New York

A Sorry, Bob, but the EC-45 tapes you bought contain only 66 meters of videotape, enough for 45 minutes of recording in PAL, but only 33 minutes in NTSC. The standard speed for PAL VHS tape is 2.339 centimeters per second, while for NTSC it's 3.335 cm/sec. When an NTSC TC-40 cassette shows up, it will have to have at least 84 meters of very thin tape to deliver 40 minutes at SP (and 60 minutes in PAL SP). Panasonic now has a TC-40 switch on its camcorders, but we're still waiting for the tape.

8mm CAMCORDER

continued from page 20

which shows as darkened picture corners and is commonly seen with accessory lenses.

The TR61 incorporates the rotary auto exposure mode switch found on some of Sony's recent family-style FX camcorders. There are four modes: portrait, sports, high-speed shutter and twilight. The latter is a new mode we haven't seen on previous Sony camcorders. It uses the normal 1/60-second shutter, but doesn't allow the aperture to open all the way, as would normally happen in twilight. This keeps the highlights bright, but dark areas remain dark to preserve the mood.

The portrait mode produces a shallow depth of field by using the maximum possible aperture setting and regulating exposure with shutter speed to 1/2,000-second. The result is that the subject is in focus, but the background and foreground are not. The sports mode uses the maximum possible shutter speeds to 1/500-second and a small aperture setting to capture medium-fast motion (as you'd get when shooting a football

game) while maintaining maximum depth of field. This way, you can get crisp still-frames and slow motion on playback. The high-speed shutter mode uses a 1/4,000-second shutter speed to capture very fast action, like a golf swing.

Its other features include fade to black or mosaic, automatic wind noise filtering and backlight compensation. A two-speed zoom lets you do slow, crawling zooms or fast zooms for quick shot framing. The integral lens cap, activated by a slide switch, is much more convenient than the usual caps, which dangle from strings and get in the way.

There are onscreen meters for zoom setting and tape remaining, and numerous other graphics reassure you of the current status for the camcorder and of trouble should it arise. The feature complement is well thought out, although you may miss A/V input (a rare omission for Sony), a headphone jack, indexing, a titler, and manual control of exposure and white balance.

At 1.7 pounds stripped and 2.2 pounds fully loaded, the TR61 ranks among the lightest 8mm camcorders. Its chassis is somewhat simplified compared to those of past Sony subcompacts —

there's no hatch covering the tape compartment. This makes changing tapes a little more convenient. The transport controls are hidden under a flap on top. A thumbwheel on the lower left side provides smooth, accurate control of manual focus. When the viewfinder is tilted up for low-angle shooting, it reveals switches for trigger alarm on/off, remote commander on/off and edit on/off plus buttons for daylight-saving time and area (time zone).

The tiny remote control measures just 1-3/8 by 2-7/8 by 3/8 inches and has buttons for playback, record and zoom. A slide switch for hold prevents accidental operation, and a holder lets you carry it on your belt or the carrying strap. The remote also lets you display the data screen on a TV, a function not available on the camcorder itself.

The camcorder is easy to carry and even easier to use than earlier TR models. To record you snap on a fresh battery, insert a cassette and put the power switch in camera mode. Your thumb does the rest by switching from lock to standby and pushing the run/stop button. The date is imprinted automatically the first time the camera is used each day. White balance is always automatic,



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but if you change from indoor to outdoor recording or vice versa, you should reset it by switching to lock mode for at least 15 seconds. Ease of operation is very good to excellent.

Picture quality is good—about what we've been getting from most 8mm camcorders. The programmed AE modes work well, with especially good results in portrait mode. It would have been nice to have higher speeds available in sports mode, but this would require a compromise in depth of field. Audio quality is average for 8mm, and you can improve the sound by adding a good external mic.

We rate the CCD-TR61 good to very good overall. Casual video shooters should find its wide-angle adapter and programmed AE modes make shooting easier and more pleasurable. ■

CAMCORNER

continued from page 24

edit setup, it's usually not that accurate, and you can buy inexpensive LANC-compatible editing controllers that bypass the editing protocol on the recording VCR by utilizing infrared remote control.

We have to warn you, though—owning an editing VCR makes editing possible, but even with synchro edit, home editing with consumer gear is not an exact science. It tends to be tremendously rewarding, but also maddening and time-consuming. You'll need to go in with patience and some degree of serenity. If you've ever thrown a golf club in a lake or hyperventilated in a traffic jam, you may want to think twice. ■

TECH TIPS

Lighting for less

We're often in situations where camcorder lights are too weak, but the alternative—a large professional light kit—is expensive and bulky. We recently discovered a solution in the form of Philips Master halogen light bulbs.

The bulbs, about \$10 each, have a fairly high color temperature well-suited for video use. They come in 50- and 75-watt versions, and each is available in three patterns, from a 30-degree flood to a nine-degree spot. You can carry a complete selection for greater flexibility.

We placed each bulb in a clip light—a socket with a switch and a wire clip that lets you hang it almost anywhere.

We chose lights with wooden handles, which make it easy to adjust the light without burning your hands. The bulbs don't need reflectors, but we added small metal ones to protect the bulbs from impacts.

This doesn't offer the precision and flexibility of a pro light kit, but at two pounds and \$16 each, these lights are ideal for amateur videography.

—Brent Butterworth

Duct tape tip

Keep pieces of duct tape stuck on your tripod for easy access. You'll find them useful for many videography emergencies. They can stabilize lights, cables and anything else that won't stay put. They're also useful for securing the flimsy plastic locks on many cheap tripods.

Jody Urbati
Quincy, Massachusetts

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HANDS-ON

continued from page 26

end). I really didn't need such a capable VCR as the AG-1960, since Thumbs Up couldn't use its five-pin jack or its insert editing capabilities. But for assemble edits, this combination worked great. Unfortunately, the only camcorders with RC time code are the V801 and its clones, and Sony's new CCD-VX3.

Thumbs Up offers another way to get time code onto recordings, even if your camcorder does not have RC: by making a copy of the original tape with SMPTE vertical interval time code (VITC). Adding VITC is quite easy—press two buttons, and run off a dub of the original tape. The time code is hidden in the video signal, and no extra picture deterioration was visible, except for the usual degradation when making a copy. (This wasn't the case with some past Videonics controllers.) This generation loss is the big drawback of using Thumbs Up to add time code.

With VITC, editing accuracy was excellent—usually within one or two frames, and never more than three frames off. But to achieve this accuracy,

I had to spend an hour calibrating the trim for the TR200/M-758 combination, to plus 14 frames at the beginning and minus five frames at the end.

VITC can also be added without going down a generation, by using a camcorder as a video camera, inserting the Thumbs Up (using batteries instead of the AC adapter) in the signal path as a VITC generator, and recording on another camcorder (with line input) or a VCR. But it's cumbersome.

A jack on the back of Thumbs Up connects to Videonics' TitleMaker, so the controller can trigger the titler to change pages automatically on cue. The title cues do not have to coincide with the edit points—for example, you can have a woman's face appear, then fade in her name for a few seconds, and then fade out.

With both the Thumbs Up and the TitleMaker in the video signal chain, a slight increase in visible picture noise is noticeable, compared with the Thumbs Up by itself, which looks very clean. When the TitleMaker superimposes over Thumbs Up's black generator, the signal gets very jittery, unless you simultaneously play a camcorder tape to serve as a video timing source.

Thumbs Up has a few significant limitations. First, it can't automatically edit tapes out of sequence. It holds up to 124 editing/title events in memory, but you can't put something from the end of the original tape at the beginning of the edited tape without resorting to manual editing. Also, you can't select individual scenes to fade up or down—once you turn the fader on, every segment fades in and out. Again, using manual control, you can overcome this.

The controller can't perform automatic insert edits, even if your VCR can. But you can cue up an insert or an audio dub manually, and use Thumbs Up to start and stop the playback deck from pause. There are many unlabeled hidden functions—for example, you have to press the preview and thumbs up buttons simultaneously to record black. The cryptic onscreen display is filled with obscure, unlabeled number codes. There are two instruction books, which is confusing—the reference manual frequently refers back to the more basic instruction manual.

But overall, Thumbs Up is an excellent value—packed with sophisticated editing power, yet unintimidating. We give it a hearty thumbs up. ■

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32-INCH TV

continued from page 15

text against a black background at the top or bottom of the screen. The second caption channel is sometimes used for foreign-language captions.

The text channels produce a black background that fills about half the screen. In most cases, the text is unrelated to the program displayed. We tried the text channels in New York City and couldn't find much — only program listings. But, depending on your locale, you might find weather, news or stock market reports.

It takes a little work to get the CS32C80 up and running. The doors and shelf come unassembled, so you'll have to put them on with a screwdriver. After you connect the antenna or cable, you'll go through a period of learning all the options. Ease of use is very good, rather than excellent, because there are so many options to learn.

Picture quality measures very good to excellent. Except for speakers, TV sets are among the most difficult electronic components to judge, because picture quality is so subjective. At *Video Magazine*, our editors seldom share the same favorites, but everyone who saw this set liked it. The color is quite realistic, especially on fleshtones. It seems a bit more sedate and understated than some of our other favorites, like the Sony XBR² and the Panasonic Gao SuperFlat. The 25-inch Sony pro monitor we use as a reference puts many consumer sets to shame, but the CX32C80 held up quite well in a side-by-side comparison. However, we always recommend you evaluate the picture quality of a set yourself before you buy it.

Audio performance measures good to very good, but when we listened to the sound system, we realized its performance is better than the measurements indicate. The large cabinet makes it possible for the system to produce a very full, smooth sound. When engaged, the subwoofer increases frequency response by about 20 Hertz — the bass starts to fall off around 60 Hz, with audible response down to about 30 Hz.

Adding surround-sound modes to direct-view sets seldom makes much sense because the small speakers usually sound so tinny. But on the CX32C80, the DSP circuitry and above-average sound system nicely complement each other. We liked the theater and stadium modes best — they add a fairly realistic ambience.

If you're interested in a console TV, this one's well worth your attention. We rate it very good to excellent. ■

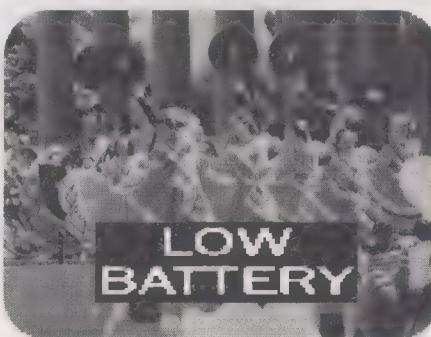
3-CCD CAMCORDER

continued from page 18

lens into the primary colors: red, green and blue. Each color of light travels to its own 270,000-pixel CCD. The result is purer image color and more accurate color encoding. Chroma (color) and luma (brightness) signals are never mixed, and the result (if you use the

S-video output) is strong, accurate color free of interference.

We are a little surprised that Panasonic chose S-VHS-C for its first prosumer three-chip camcorder, because such cassettes are less robust than full-sized VHS ones. The tape can be mangled by the camcorder or the S-VHS-C adapter unless you handle the cassette carefully and remember to take up the slack before inserting one in the cam-



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corder (or use one of the new cassettes with reel locks).

Panasonic wisely included digital image stabilization, which is a real boon with a small, light camcorder like this one. The stabilizer works well, especially on detailed, high-contrast subjects. On low-contrast subjects, it often doesn't activate. The correction of the stabilizer can be a bit jittery.

The camcorder has a wide range of digital effects to enhance in-camera production. There's a 2x digital zoom that extends the 10x optical range to 20x, plus still and strobe effects. A snapshot button lets you record a memorized still-frame for five seconds—you use it instead of the record button.

The wipe and mix modes both create a transition into a previously memorized still-frame. Just memorize the still, and while you're shooting, you can wipe the still into and out of the frame from the left, or mix (dissolve) it in. This is great for adding professional-looking titles—just grab a still-frame of a handwritten or typeset title, and dissolve it in and out. You can even grab a still of a scene as it ends and dissolve it into the next scene, but it takes dexterity and concentration.

There's also a widescreen mode that lets you produce a squeezed 4:3 picture. If you play this picture back on a 16:9 widescreen set, it will fill the screen completely. The same digital circuitry that creates these effects also performs noise reduction and timebase correction. The timebase corrector works well—it should facilitate exceptionally clean dubs when you use the AG-3 as a player. But it's not stable enough to feed a Video Toaster.

The AG-3 also has digital gain-up, selectable at 4x or 8x. It combines the light from several frames into one, so you get a brighter picture, but you also get a trailing strobe effect—it works fine on static shots, but on motion shots, it's useful mainly as a creative effect.

The camcorder has a full set of manual controls. A knurled wheel on the front of the camcorder controls iris setting (plus or minus six stops) and shutter speed. A button on the side of the camcorder switches the knob between the two functions. A rotary switch on the side selects between full auto, manual and shutter AE modes.

The latter is used to help you achieve a specific depth of field—the amount of the picture that is in focus.

With shutter AE engaged, a unique depth-of-field indicator appears in the LCD display on the top panel, along with iris setting and shutter speed displays. The depth-of-field meter is affected by both zoom and iris settings. The shutter has many more steps than usual, making it a precise exposure control.

The shutter AE mode also lets you use the low-light button, which boosts gain (and therefore brightness) by six decibels with one push, 12 dB with a second push. Although Panasonic cautions that using this switch can make the picture grainy, we didn't experience as much extra graininess as we expected. There's also an AE lock button in the center of the rotary selector switch, which lets you freeze the settings so the exposure of a subject doesn't change with panning and zooming.

A black/white balance button lets you access auto, indoor, outdoor and fluorescent modes. The last mode also works in twilight. Adjusting the white balance might throw you off because the viewfinder goes black for a second—it adjusts black balance before white balance. Manual focusing is smooth and accurate, because the AG-3 uses a power focus ring on the front of the lens, as do

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many recent Sony camcorders. The autofocus works very well for a through-the-lens system—it's reasonably fast, but exceptionally stable.

The AG-3 has outputs for S-video, video and stereo audio, but no inputs, so it can't be used for recording from another video source. It has jacks for headphones and an external microphone. There's also a jack labeled "new edit," which is a new version of the Panasonic five-pin editing jack. It's different from the jack on the AG-1970 VCR. It wouldn't work with the Future Video edit controller we tried. Panasonic says the jack is compatible with some of the functions of the AG-A96 controller, and that it will eventually produce a controller compatible with the new edit jack.

A switch on the right side converts the stereo mic into a zoom mic, so that the pickup pattern gets tighter as you zoom in. It works quite well—you'll probably want to leave this switch on most of the time. The AG-3 records stereo hi-fi and mono linear track audio, but only plays the hi-fi tracks.

The camcorder is comfortable to hold and use. As you might expect, it's noticeably heavier than other subcompacts, but it's well-balanced. Its color LCD viewfinder may be the best we've seen—it's sharp enough to let you achieve clear focus, and the color is fairly accurate. Ease of use is very good.

Audio quality is good to very good, and picture quality is very good to excellent. The color is well-saturated and very accurate, and the picture is unusually detailed for S-VHS-C. The digital effects degrade the picture only slightly—not nearly as much as most camcorders with digital effects. Most of these camcorders display an unnatural-looking picture that almost seems to have translucent worms crawling all over it. However, the AG-3 is refreshingly free of this "digital grunge."

Unfortunately, you pay a price for the AG-3's good color. Since the light through the lens must be divided between three sensors, low-light performance drops. We measured it for our standard of 50 IRE units at 34 lux in normal mode, and 7.6 lux with 8x gain-up and the low-light button set for a 12-dB boost. In rooms lit with only a few lamps, you may have to live with the strobe effect from the gain-up.

The picture doesn't quite match that of Sony's CCD-VX3 (see "The Missing Link," March '93), probably because Sony's three-chip sensor uses CCDs with 50 percent more resolution. However, the VX3 is \$500 more expensive and lacks the AG-3's versatile digital effects. Although they're very different camcorders, we suspect your choice will boil down to format. ■

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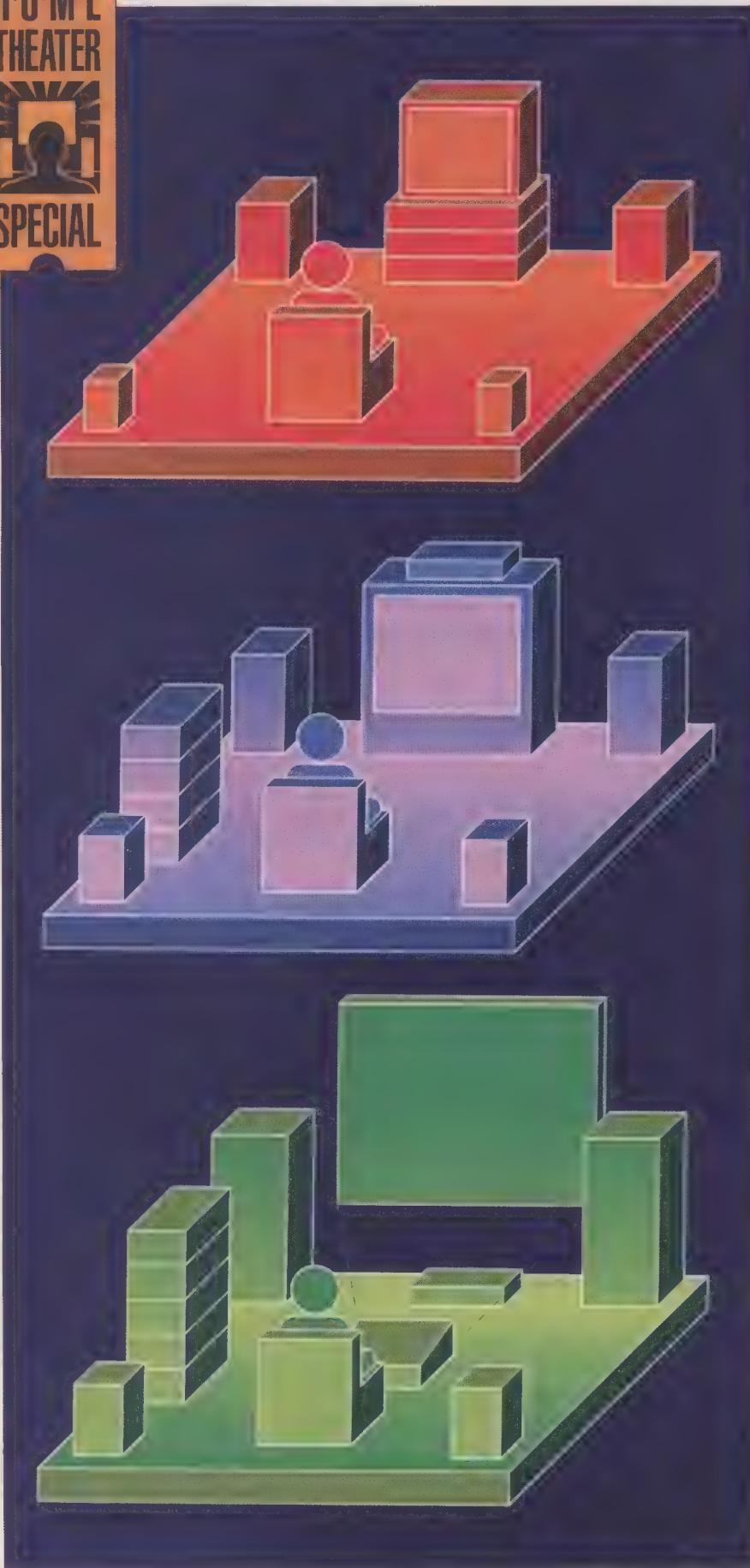
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H-O-M-E
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SPECIAL



BY LAWRENCE B. JOHNSON

ALL

Three ways to launch your ideal home theater.

In that bygone era when a TV was simply a TV—a glowing screen unconnected to VCRs, speakers, receivers and the like—friends used to ask me how much they'd need to spend to assemble a good sound system. My answer was about \$1,500. Today's buzz phrase, home theater, refers to audio *and* video, and the ante has gone up. But so has the pleasure.

You can assemble a rewarding entry-level home theater system for about \$3,000, and we're going to show you how to do it. We're also going to show you ways to double the bet, then double it again by assembling top-notch home theater systems for around \$6,000 and \$12,000. Each of our three systems—and variations with alternative components—will include a home theater's essential elements, by which we mean a video monitor, five channels of amplified power, a surround-sound speaker package, Dolby Pro-Logic processing, a laser-disc player and a hi-fi VCR.

What has made it possible to create an effective home theater plan for as little as \$3,000 is the audio/video receiver. System amplification, Dolby processing and component switching are all accomplished neatly and effectively within this one economical black box. That's why, with one exception, all our options are receiver-based. Until you get into some heavyweight power requirements, which entail hefty budgets, there's simply no need for a separate processor and a cluster of amplifiers.

While our recommendations are specific, they're intended also to demonstrate the types of components and the

SYSTEMS GO

variety of models suitable for home theaters. Audio/video showrooms are rich with alternatives in every category, and for most budgets. You'll also note we've apparently run over our own budget targets. Actually, we haven't. The prices cited are the "list" prices manufacturers suggest, not the discounted "street" prices available to virtually all shoppers, especially in package deals.

SYSTEM 1: \$3,000 THE PRICE IS RIGHT

We're going to start with the least

costly of our systems. Opinions differ on the best way to divide a budget, but for my money the visual impact of any home theater begins with a big TV picture — I recommend at least 31 inches. A high-performance monitor/receiver, like JVC's AV-31BP3 with its fine detail and natural colors, marks an experiential leap beyond the boundaries of 27-inch television. Once you commit to this kind of visual grandeur — investing, in this case, about half your budget at retail — you're ready to shape the rest of the system.

I don't know whether technology is trickling down or welling up, but either way what's happening is good news for anyone fashioning a home theater on a tight budget. Take Technics' SA-GX550 audio/video receiver. It's an exemplary value at \$400. The Dolby Pro-Logic and video switching circuits are complemented by enough power to drive a full array of surround speakers: 75 watts to the front stereo pair and center channel plus 30 watts (times two) to the rear.

Add two pairs of PSB's little

Basic Instincts: RCA's 31-inch F31226ES television atop optional stand and Pioneer's CLD-S201 laserdisc player.

Alpha bookshelf speakers, with the companion 100C center-channel speaker, and you'll have a responsive sound package that satisfies economies of space as well as means. The Alphas should please your ears, too. At the price — about \$550 for PSB's theater suite — they're virtually in a class by themselves.



Switching Solution: Technics' SA-GX550 is an affordable receiver that combines Dolby Pro-Logic with plenty of wattage.

These mighty mites are beautiful. They can deliver a reasonable likeness of Arnold Schwarzenegger's motorcycle roaring in pursuit of the evil android in *Terminator 2*, as well as every range of the human voice, up through the highest audible registers of music. You may want to add a subwoofer sometime in the future. Indeed, PSB designer Paul Barton says he's working on one. On the other hand, apartment dwellers might be well advised not to push their luck.

For source components, our number-one choice is a laserdisc player. You can get all sorts of features on today's players, but the one you'll use after the gimmick value wears off is automatic second-side play. However, this comes at a fairly steep price. For good basic performance, with single-side play, I like Pioneer's CLD-S201, a new model with a dedicated CD drawer that pops out of the front panel independently of the larger laserdisc tray.

Basic service will suffice as well for a VCR — provided it includes hi-fi performance. Full-frequency sound is critical to enjoying movies at home. As a matter of fact, videotape is a superb medium for recording music. A hi-fi VCR can ap-





SYSTEMS

Slim and Sleek: Sony's KPR-41EXR95 is among the slimmest rear projectors, while Denon's AVR-2000 A/V receiver has plenty of head room for power-gulping sound effects.

component, not television. When looking at a TV image in a store, turn the sound off, which is how I evaluate TV sets. The audio will come from your hi-fi system, and no built-in TV sound can touch that.

Onkyo's TX-SV515PRO makes an appealing alternative receiver. Onkyo's A/V

receiver series is outstanding. Although the power output of the TX-SV515PRO is rated at a modest 55 watts per channel across the front and 20-by-two in the rear, it's more

than ample for the PSB speakers, which I would not change. For a second VCR option, check out Sony's SLV-595HF. It's a ruggedly built hi-fi deck with a slick remote.

SYSTEM 2: TURNING UP THE VOLUME

A larger bankroll, at the \$6,000 level, means you can wrap yourself up in a bigger picture. But another kind of im-

mersion is equally important: deep bass with real firepower. While home theater buffs talk a lot about refinements in Dolby Pro-Logic, it's axiomatic inside the industry that the home theater experience is ultimately about rib-rocking bass. That's what makes you feel like you're in the middle of the action, whether dodging falling beams in *Backdraft* or surviving blasts from Imperial starfighters in *Return of the Jedi*.

Bass Cube: DCM's SUB-712 subwoofer adds power and, for \$699, good value to a home theater.



proach CD-quality sound. Prices for hi-fi decks start at around \$500, retail. Toshiba's M642 delivers an excellent picture and offers the bonus of front audio/video jacks for connecting a camcorder.

SYSTEM 1 VARIATION

Several other 31-inch video monitors would also work well in this system, notably RCA's F31226ES. As you shop, focus on picture quality. Think video

THREE SYSTEMS FOR THREE BUDGETS

The systems in the accompanying article include a variety of components. Here's a cost breakdown of each system and its variation. All the totals are well within the discounts commonly offered by audio/video dealers.

SYSTEM 1: THE PRICE IS RIGHT

• JVC AV-31BP3 31-inch direct-view TV	\$1,600
Technics SA-GX550 A/V receiver	\$400
• Pioneer CLD-S201 laserdisc player	\$535
• Toshiba M642 VHS VCR	\$500
• PSB Alpha speakers, two pairs	\$400
• PSB 100C center-channel speaker	\$150
Total:	\$3,585

SYSTEM 1 VARIATION

• RCA F31226ES 31-inch direct-view TV	\$1,399
• Onkyo TX-SV515PRO A/V receiver	\$500
• Sony SLV-595HF VHS VCR	\$599
• Same laserdisc player & speakers as above	\$1,185
Total:	\$3,683

SYSTEM 2: TURNING UP THE VOLUME

• Mitsubishi CS-35MX1 35-inch direct-view TV	\$2,200
• Denon AVR-2000 A/V receiver	\$850
• Panasonic LX-600 laserdisc player	\$800
• RCA VR667HF VHS VCR	\$549
• Video Acoustics speakers	\$2,000
Total:	\$6,399

SYSTEM 2 VARIATION

• Sony KPR-41EXR95 41-inch rear-projection TV	\$2,799
• Same receiver, laserdisc player and VCR as above	\$2,199
• DCM TF-400 TimeFrame speakers, one pair	\$570
• DCM CX07 bookshelf speakers, one pair	\$250
• DCM CX07 center-channel speaker	\$125
• DCM SUB-712 subwoofer	\$699
Total:	\$6,642

SYSTEM 3: SOMETHING WILD

• Pulsar Prodigy Excel front projector	\$6,700
• Da-Lite Design Da-Tab Electrol screen	\$2,163

• Yamaha RX-V1070 A/V receiver	\$1,299
• Pioneer CLD-D502 laserdisc player	\$760
• Mitsubishi HS-U67 S-VHS VCR	\$999
• Acoustic Research Model 4.5 speakers, one pair	\$800
• Acoustic Research M.5 speakers, one pair	\$219
• Acoustic Research MC.1 center speaker	\$159
Total:	\$13,099

SYSTEM 3 VARIATION

• Pioneer Elite Pro1C6 55-inch rear-proj. TV	\$4,500
• Kenwood KC-X1 THX controller tuner	\$999
• Kenwood KM-X1 THX amplifier	\$899
• Altec Lansing THX AHT2200 front speakers, one pair	\$600
• Altec Lansing THX AHT2200 center-channel speaker	\$300
• Altec Lansing THX AHT2100 surround speakers, one pair	\$900
• Altec Lansing THX AHT2300 subwoofer	\$1,200
• Marantz LV-500 laserdisc player	\$799
• Same VCR as above	\$999
• Acoustic Research M6 auxiliary speakers	\$1,200
Total:	\$12,396



Front-Channel Punch: DCM's TF-400 TimeFrame speakers are its smallest floor-standing models.

and it lies at the heart of the home theater experience.

Our path to achieving it begins with the rigorously designed high-current amplifiers in Denon's AVR-2000 receiver. Although its power rating of 80 watts per channel across the front, plus 20 per side in the rear, may not seem gargantuan on paper, Denon has provided ample "head room" for instantaneous, power-gulping demands.

This brings us to speakers, and a system that impresses me as a double-edged breakthrough in surround-sound design and cost effectiveness: the Video

Acoustics array from Thomson Electronics, the folks who make RCA TV sets. The \$2,000 package begins with smallish bookshelf speakers for front stereo, augmented by a subwoofer that fires from adjacent surfaces of the enclosure for optimal dispersion. A center channel likewise fans its audio so the dialog sounds focused from any seat in the room. A unified rear-channel enclosure fires upward and to the sides to achieve effective ambient sound.

My choice for a video monitor is Mitsubishi's CS-35MX1, a 35-inch direct-view set that brings stunning resolution to a grand image. At \$2,200, it's an attractive value. The price also marks the point at which rear projector sets, with larger screen sizes, become available. This gives you a clear choice between direct-view and projection.

Whatever option you choose, base your purchase strictly on picture quality. Just as TV sound is irrelevant in planning a home theater, so are rear-panel "jack packs." The only A/V line you're going to connect to that TV is a single thin strand of

video cable from the receiver's monitor output. All your source components will patch directly into the receiver.

My vote for a laserdisc player in this system goes to Panasonic's LX-600. At \$800, it's the least expensive model with automatic second-side play. Among moderately priced VCRs, the RCA VR667HF offers the bonus of elegance with a first-rate image and hi-fi sound.

SYSTEM 2 VARIATION

To broaden our choices, let's go back and explore the television road not

No television sound system can evoke these sensations. Apart from lacking the heavy-duty bass speakers needed to get the job done, the modest amplifiers built into TV sets simply cannot muster the horsepower demanded to project extremely low frequencies, undistorted, at high volumes. Hi-fi buffs call this sound-pressure level,

When the Music Swells: AR's M6 speakers offer a satisfying home theater option for music lovers.



Going for Broke: Pulsar's Prodigy Excel projector (top), Kenwood's KC-X1 THX processor (center) and Altec Lansing's AHT2300 subwoofer, part of its \$3,000 THX speaker array.

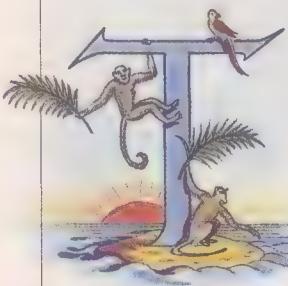
taken, and trade our direct-view monitor for a rear-screen projector. Here, Sony's slim-line 41-inch KPR-41EXR95 is among the most appealing and practical

continued on page 94

DESERT ISLAND DISCS



*Six seafaring critics
pick their top titles for
shipwrecked viewers.*



Pacific to ease the stillness. You're alone, shipwrecked on a lush desert island. Lucky for you, your state-of-the-art home theater and solar generator have also washed ashore. You look into your

sun beats down on a shell-studded beach, with only a cool breeze from the

waterproof carry-all, wishing you'd had room for more than three of your favorite laserdisks. Which titles would you hope to find? And will they sustain you until that message in a bottle reaches the distant shore?

Sure, this predicament doesn't happen every day. But it sets the stage for our first-ever look at the laser software we simply can't live without—the Desert Island Discs. We asked six Video

Magazine editors and contributors—laser fanatics all—to choose three titles they revere above all others for content, disc quality and repeatability. We also asked each to name five runners-up. Their highly personal choices, presented below in order of preference, are guaranteed to show even land-locked home theaters to their best advantage.

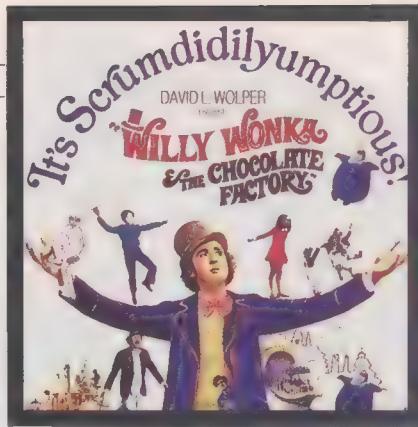


KENNETH KORMAN,
Senior Editor

North by Northwest (MGM/UA). No matter how many times you see it, Hitchcock's greatest comic thriller never loses its satiric edge or breathtaking visual style. MGM's laser edition preserves the vivid Technicolor hues and original VistaVision aspect ratio, and offers bonuses like an exclusive stereo soundtrack, the theatrical trailer and a CAV-format finale. This package deftly reaffirms *North by Northwest* as the most entertaining movie ever made.

Sullivan's Travels (MCA/Universal). The cinematic equivalents of great Cole Porter tunes, Preston Sturges' best movies are as witty and sharp as anything that ever came out of Hollywood's golden age. *Sullivan's Travels* balances uproarious comedy with a social conscience that's still relevant 52 years after the film's premiere. The first time the phrase "written and directed by..." ever appeared on a film, it was followed by the name Preston Sturges, and this, his masterpiece, shows how he earned that privilege.

Andres Segovia: The Song of the Guitar (Teldec). Shot in 1976, this graceful, bittersweet film captures the spirit of one of the century's great artists in the twilight of his career. Segovia's



musings on his life, art and extraordinary gift are intercut with passionate performances of his signature tunes. And it all takes place in the most beautiful and appropriate setting imaginable — Spain's Palace of the Alhambra, where as a boy, Segovia first opened his eyes "to the beauty of nature and art."

RUNNERS-UP:

Lawrence of Arabia (Criterion)

Apocalypse Now (Paramount)

West Side Story (MGM/UA)

The Right Stuff (Warner)

Great National Parks: Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone (Lumivision)

"kidvid," the twisted humor and Gene Wilder's just-this-side-of-sanity performance as the title character make *Willy Wonka* a fantasy from which grown-ups can get more than a few wicked chuckles.

The Commitments (FoxVideo).

The world's hardest working (fictional) band also produces some of the most instantly compelling music on disc. As a not-so-cohesive group "bringing soul to the people," these Dubliners scrap off stage only to suddenly make magic once they're on, with "Try a Little Tenderness" and more. The film itself is engagingly watchable — and also wonderfully listenable, thanks to the chapters encoded for each song.

The Women (MGM/UA).

A winner for sheer repeatability, *The Women's* two-hour catfight still seems fresh after

numerous viewings, and the crisp black-and-white picture that suddenly blooms into Technicolor for one segment always pleases. What makes the George Cukor film such a delight, though, is *The Women's* all-female cast: Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell, Paulette Goddard and the hilarious Mary Boland, as a much-married duchess who lapses into French when distressed. Oh, l'amour, l'amour...

RUNNERS-UP:

The Busby Berkeley Disc (MGM/UA)

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (MGM/UA)

Notorious (Criterion)

A Room With a View (CBS/Fox)

Jaws (MCA/Universal)



STEVE DALY,
Contributing Editor

Beauty and the Beast: Work in Progress (Walt Disney). For picture quality, no laserdisc can equal projected

continued on page 100

*Send
more
disks!*

RECEIVER ROULETTE

Nine top A/V receivers roll for top honors
in a hands-on home theater shootout.

Home theater is the hottest thing going in consumer electronics. And for most people, the key to a hot home theater is a hot audio/video receiver. That's no surprise. With five amplifiers, a preamp, a Dolby Pro-Logic decoder and an A/V switcher built in, an A/V receiver is the soul of convenience and affordability. Add a big-screen TV, a hi-fi VCR and a comfortable couch, and you're set.

On the surface, A/V receivers look pretty similar. But if you look closer, you'll find more buttons, jacks and menu options than you've probably ever seen on an electronic component. Today's A/V receivers are so laden with features, it takes days to learn them all. On top of that, product literature and buyer's guides throw pages of specifications at you, yet seldom explain the sonic or ergonomic benefits implied by the numbers. With A/V receivers priced from \$400 to \$2,000, it can be a confusing situation for the consumer.

At *Video Magazine*, we're lucky enough to have high-end components like a \$3,000 Lexicon CP-3 decoder and a stack of Marantz THX amps to

use when we set up a home theater. But we've been amazed to find we're almost as happy with the sound of a good \$500 receiver. Two years ago, we tried three inexpensive A/V receivers ("Breaking the Surround Barrier," Nov. '91) and found them all acceptable, within limitations, but that experience left us wondering what an extra \$700 or so could buy. Senior editor Kenneth Korman and I decided to find out.

We rounded up six receivers in the \$1,000 to \$1,300 price range—Carver's \$1,249 HR-895, Denon's \$1,300 AVR-3000, Harman-Kardon's \$1,049 AVR30, Marantz's \$1,100 SR-92, Nakamichi's \$1,200 AV-1 and Yamaha's \$1,299 RX-V1070—and tried them with an eclectic collection of laserdisks and CDs. We also tried two receivers and one integrated amplifier with even higher price tags to find out just how good an A/V receiver can get (see "Electronic Elite: Three High-End Options"). Finally, we compared the receivers to a leading \$500 model, Onkyo's TX-SV515PRO, to see if doubling the price gets you double the performance.

Most of these receivers have similar specifications—about 80 to 110 watts in the front three channels, and 20 to 40 in the rear. But this doesn't mean they all sound alike. Cramming all the components into such a compact chassis takes a lot of skill. It's tough to do without creating performance problems in one or more sections. Given the widely varying

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

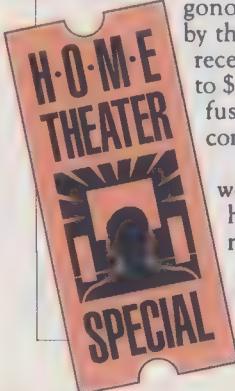
circuit designs in these devices, it's only natural to expect sonic differences. And of course, most manufacturers claim their products are sonically superior to their competitors'.

We conducted separate listening tests to evaluate the receivers' performance on two-channel music, music surround and Dolby Pro-Logic movie sound. During these tests, we thoroughly checked out the receivers' features, and learned (the hard way) about their operational anomalies. In this article, we'll comment on the features we thought most im-

portant. However, we strongly suggest you make sure any receiver you plan to buy has the features you need. What's important to us might not matter to you, and vice versa—especially regarding radio reception, which is dicey in our New York City office.

For movie sound, we set levels using the LucasArts THX Wow demo disc. In our 5,500-cubic-foot home theater room, achieving THX-specified levels (peak sound pressure level of 105 decibels) can be quite a chore for a receiver. Some handled the job easily, but some struggled. If your room is fairly small, or you never intend to pump up the volume, all the receivers we tried should produce the volume you need without distortion.

It's always difficult for us to give advice about audio electronics because there's so much disagreement about them. Most people consider the differences among electronic components subtle at most and in many cases inconsequential. We disagree. We consider such differences important, but keep in mind that the \$1,800 main speakers we used for this test are far more revealing than the less-expensive speakers most people own. If you own a very good pair of audiophile speakers and are picky about sound, the sonic differences between these receivers will be important to you. But if your home theater goals and tastes are more modest, you'll probably be happy with the two-channel music and Pro-Logic movie sound of any of these units.



THE CARVER HR-895 AND THE MARANTZ SR-92

These two receivers look very different at first glance, but upon closer inspection, we noticed their control and jack layouts are virtually identical. Surprisingly, the Marantz remote operates the Carver receiver, and vice versa. Carver justifies its \$149 higher price by including a multiroom remote infrared receiver, which is a \$99 option on the Marantz.

The remote IR receiver relays remote control commands from another room to the receiver. The receiver has speaker connections that let it power a set of speakers in the second room—you can listen to different sources in different rooms. This works fine if you're only using the tuner in the second room, but to control other devices, they must be of the same brand as the receiver. The Carver and the multiroom option for the Marantz both come with a simplified credit-card-size remote for the second room.

There's another slight difference—the Carver offers Sonic Holography circuitry, which slightly widens the soundstage and boosts the midrange. The Marantz instead offers a bass boost button. The Carver also has an ACCD circuit designed to improve FM reception.

Both pumped out fine Pro-Logic sound, with plenty of power. The sound is detailed and natural, as you'd expect from such straightforward designs. Both have a simulated surround mode that works acceptably on mono movies—it's nice for old war flicks like *Sergeant York*. Both have matrix and hall music surround modes which sounded okay, but didn't really appeal to us. Despite the receivers' similarities, the Carver sounds a bit better on two-channel music than the Marantz—it's smoother and better balanced, while the Marantz has a trace of glare in the midrange.

We had two problems using these receivers. First, the buttons on the remotes are all the same size, and the labels don't stand out in the dark—it's

Tower of Power: From the top—Nakamichi's \$1,200 AV-1, Yamaha's \$1,299 RX-V1070, Denon's \$1,300 AVR-3000, Harmon-Kardon's \$1,049 AVR-30, Carver's \$1,249 HR-895 and Marantz's \$1,100 SR-92.



PHOTOS: LES MORSITZ

Electronic Elite: Three High-End Options

BY
KENNETH
KORMAN

Power Trio:
Mitsubishi's \$1,699
HTS-300 receiver
(top), Yamaha's
\$1,999 DSP-A2070
integrated amplifier
(center) and Onkyo's
\$1,800 TX-
SV909PRO receiver
(bottom).

Recent developments in home theater audio have not only brought top performance to midpriced A/V receivers, but led to the creation of a new breed of no-holds-barred, top-of-the-line machines with unprecedented features and performance levels. We decided to put three new models through their paces: Yamaha's DSP-A2070 (\$1,999), Onkyo's TX-SV909PRO (\$1,800) and Mitsubishi's HTS-300 (\$1,699).

All three provide basic A/V functions—video switching, multichannel amplification and Dolby Pro-Logic processing—plus high-end features like elaborate on-screen menus, programmable universal remotes and generous amounts of power. While the Onkyo and Mitsubishi are A/V receivers, the Yamaha must be classified as an A/V integrated amp because it lacks an AM/FM tuner—you'll have to add a separate tuner to listen to radio broadcasts.

Yamaha's DSP-A2070 is intended to showcase the company's pioneering work in digital signal processing (DSP). Its 11 cinema DSP modes tailor the sound for various types of video programs—modes include "70mm Adventure" and "TV Variety/Sports"—while 12 audio DSP modes recreate the unique sonic characteristics of specific venues, such as New York's Village Gate jazz club. Amplification and speaker-level outputs for two "front effects" channels—beyond the five channels normally used with Pro-Logic and DSP enhancements—are provided to help achieve these aims. (The extra speakers should be mounted near the ceiling, behind the main speakers.) The Yamaha's onscreen menu system accesses from five to nine parameters for each DSP mode to allow fine-tuning of the sound. It has output jacks for a monitor in another room, but unlike the Onkyo and the Mitsubishi, no special multiroom capabilities.

The 2070 performed admirably throughout our listening tests. Its tonal balance in the standard two-channel stereo mode immediately placed it above the midpriced receivers we tested (see accompanying story). We also appreciated its solid Pro-Logic sound. But this unit's main selling points obviously lie in the DSP arena. No other A/V receiver we've seen provides such detailed control over multichannel sound for music and movies—tinkerers will regard the 2070 as a real find. We aren't sold on the need for seven-channel configurations, but no matter: The Yamaha's DSP modes also

shine in a standard five-channel setup.

Unlike the other two high-end units we tested, the Yamaha allows direct access to all multichannel modes through the remote control without scrolling through all the selections. And we loved the 2070's look and feel—almost all the front-panel controls are hidden behind a

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RECEIVER



Remote Rights and Wrongs: Mitsubishi's HTS-300 remote (top) offers backlighting and large, easy-to-use buttons. The Marantz SR-92 remote (above, left) presents a confusing array of same-size buttons, while the Yamaha DSP-A2070 remote (above, right) uses bright colors and varied shapes to differentiate buttons.

difficult to operate the remotes by feel. Second, neither has an automatic input level control for Pro-Logic. A tiny peak level indicator on the front helps you set the proper level, but if you set it incorrectly, you'll get atrocious distortion in the rear speakers. Either receiver, however, is a good buy.

THE DENON AVR-3000

The Denon AVR-3000 is a step up in sophistication from the Carver and

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With Sound-Effects, JBL creates the world's most versatile home theater speakers.

When it comes to home theater, most speaker companies are behind the eight ball. Today's home theater speaker systems usually consist of two speakers designed for music, coupled with hastily engineered center and rear speakers. This mix is seldom synergistic—the sound of the speakers often doesn't blend well, and the extra speakers tend to make a living room look like a studio. Atlantic Technology and Video Acoustics have addressed the issue with systems designed specifically for home theater, but the big players have remained on the sidelines.

JBL—one of the biggest names in loudspeakers—is out to change that. The company's new SoundEffects speaker line isn't just a quick-and-dirty, thrown-together collection. It represents a complete rethinking of the home theater speaker system.

The marketing concept behind SoundEffects is "music, movies and magic." The line starts with the \$750 Music 1 system—two tiny, two-way satellite speakers with two small passive subwoofers. The Movies 1 add-on—one more satellite for the center, plus two round speakers for surround—gives you home theater sound for an extra \$250.

SURROUND SOLUTION



Home Theater Revolution: The SoundEffects line (above, clockwise from bottom)—Center A/V satellite, Sat3 pie-shaped satellite, Sat2 A/V satellite, Bass100 powered subwoofer, Bass1 passive subwoofer, Surround round speaker and Sat1 small satellite. Below right, a rear-speaker stand with two Sat2s, a Taket RF receiver and a Power20 20-watt amp.

Things really get rolling when you move up to the \$830 Music 2 system. It comprises two satellites, each of which incorporates two low-frequency drivers and one tweeter, and a powered subwoofer with a 100-watt amp. The

\$500 Movies 2 addition includes three more A/V satellites, one with a special grille that makes it more attractive when used as a center speaker.

If you wish to stand the powered subwoofers vertically and use them as speaker stands, JBL offers a pie-shaped satellite speaker that fits perfectly on top. It uses the same drivers as the A/V sats, with a slightly different crossover network to compensate for the rounded face of the speaker. You can also get a pie-shaped, 50-watt-per-channel amp (80 watts bridged for mono) that fits between the satellite and the subwoofer, so you can create a true biamplified system.

All the speakers—which will be available in mid- to late summer—are designed for maximum versatility and visual appeal. Satellites come with brackets that allow easy wall mounting and wire-routing channels that let the wires run gracefully from the bottom of each cabinet, instead of hanging from the sides. All of the crossovers, which send high frequencies to the satellites and low frequencies to the subwoofers, are built into the speakers. This way, you don't have to run wires to the sub-

woofer, then to the satellites, so you save wire and clutter. A wire-management box provided with the system allows easy, simplified speaker hookup.

The subwoofers are designed so they fit gracefully along the floorboards or in a corner, so you give up very little useful floor space. However, de-



pending on your room's acoustics, this might compromise the sound. (We ended up using one powered subwoofer placed on its side, about 18 inches from the front wall in our 5,500-cubic-foot home theater facility.)

The "magic" part of the equation solves the biggest problem of home theater — how to run the wires back to the rear speakers without making a mess of your living room floor, and without performing surgery on your walls. Both Magic systems — the \$600 Magic 1 and the \$500 Magic 2 — use a radio-frequency transmitter/receiver pair to send sound to the rear speakers without wires.

The Magic 1 system combines the transmitter, the receiver and a 50-watt-per-channel amp for rear speakers. But the Magic 2 system is the one that turned our heads. It fits the receiver on a stand with two satellites, which are pointed away from each other to create a diffuse soundfield perfect for Dolby Pro-Logic. A 20-watt-per-channel amp for the rear speakers fits on the stand in a neat stack with the receiver.

When you're done watching a movie, just grab the top of the stand and haul it with you anywhere there's an electrical outlet — even outdoors — for a portable music system that uses the source components in your A/V system. You can also use this technology to set up a multiroom system without running any wires. JBL will offer an optional RF remote control and receiver that will let you control the central A/V system from any room.

The transmitter sends two stereo signals simultaneously, and the receiver

can be set to pick up either of the two signals. Each input on the transmitter has a loop-through output. A typical setup would connect the channel-one input of the transmitter to the line-level RCA output jacks for the surround channels of an A/V receiver. If your receiver doesn't have line-level surround outputs, just connect wires from the surround speaker jacks to the transmitter's speaker-level inputs.

Channel two of the transmitter would connect to the outputs of a CD player or any other audio source, and the loop-through outputs would connect to the A/V receiver's CD input. The CD sound passes through when you're listening to a CD on the main system, and when you want to listen to music through the portable system, just set its receiver to channel two.

Unfortunately, many of today's subwoofer/satellite systems seem to be designed more for looks than sound. Frankly, we expected such an attractive system as SoundEffects to sound competent at best. But a couple of days with a set of SoundEffects prototypes showed that the system is *much* more than competent — it sounds absolutely terrific!

The configuration that captured our hearts was the \$1,330 Music and Movies 2 system, with five A/V satellites and one powered subwoofer. The satellites image beautifully with two-channel music, creating a feeling of real instruments in a room on most recordings. The soundstage was wide and deep, particularly on orchestral recordings like Jorgen's *Symphonie Concertante*. The sound was remarkably neutral, with little identifiable character. That's rare for inex-

pensive speakers — most add sonic colorations, and the buyer ends up having to select a coloration he or she likes. Not so with SoundEffects. For two-channel music, the sound is competitive with that of many affordable audiophile speakers.

Best of all, the system sounds just as good for movies and music — a feat that, in our experience, is equaled only by Atlantic Technology's Pattern 150 system, which is \$500 less expensive, but doesn't offer the dynamic range of the Music and Movies 2 system. The system easily handled everything we threw at it, from the Super Bit-Mapped CD of Dave Brubeck's *Time Out* to the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* laserdisc.

The key to this great sound is that all of the satellites in the SoundEffects line use the same drivers, so on Dolby Surround videos the sound character changes very little as sounds move around the room. (The round surround speakers use a full-range version of the low-frequency driver, with no tweeter.)

The Music and Movies 2 system is easily worth the minimal extra investment over the Music and Movies 1 system. The smaller speakers sound fine for what they are, but we preferred the extra oomph of the powered sub and the extended dynamic range of the larger satellites.

Our complaints about the system are meager. The subwoofer isn't the punchiest we've heard in this price range, but it still sounds very good. Given a week or two of listening, we probably could have improved the bass a bit by trying various subwoofer placements.

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JUNE 1993 VIDEO 57

Late one Saturday night in 1991, the angry buzz of police activity wakes a Los Angeles plumber. Sensing a good chance to try out his new 8mm camcorder, he steps out onto his balcony and begins to shoot the scene unfolding across the street. Days later, his tape is the talk of the nation. A year later, it leads to riots that devastate Los Angeles and send a shock wave through urban America.

A private pilot driving a pickup truck through South Central L.A. as the riot begins decides to capture the scene with his camcorder. That day and the next, he shoots hours of intense you-are-there footage of the disorder. News stations eagerly license the rights to his spellbinding footage. He's paid well for its use, but finds he's gotten more than he bargained for. The FBI also wants his tapes, and he learns that local gang members are after his head.

With millions of camcorders in private hands, the coveted ability to capture — and market — the news no longer belongs only to members of the news media. Until the advent of camcorders, explosive or incriminating events were generally recorded by professionals who knew not only how to get the shot, but how to stay out of harm's way.

Now, everyone who owns a camcorder is a potential newshound. TV stations encourage the practice. Reality-based TV shows like *I Witness Video* solicit tapes. Small fees are common, large fees are possible. The rules of engagement for electronic newsgathering are spinning out of control. Anyone with a charged battery and a blank tape has the ability to record the truth as the camcorder sees it, and have those images exposed to a national audience.

Sometimes, everyone benefits. Recall the case, last September, of two parents, John and Betty Lewis, who suspected their live-in nanny of secretly beating their two-year-old daughter. The Lewises set up a camcorder in the TV room and caught the nanny in the act. The footage ended the child's abuse, helped to

BY RON GOLDBERG

TRUTH, PRIVACY



& THE LAW

convict the woman of assault, for which she served two months, and focused attention on the issue of child care.

Other times, videomakers get more than they bargain for — much more. Few are prepared for the aftereffects of fame or notoriety. Ordinary people thrust into the news as a result of tapes they shot, usually on the spur of a moment, have experienced complex legal and personal entanglements, relentless media coverage, harassing public opinion — even the threat of violence.

What laws can they turn to for protection? There is no simple answer. The bottom line is that news events captured by amateurs exist in a legal environment designed for professionals. "There are no laws that focus strictly on amateur video recordings," explains Janlori Goldman, director of the Privacy and Technology project for the American Civil Liberties Union. Unlike a wiretap, which is directly invasive, anyone has the right to shoot a public event, so long as the videographer doesn't infringe on another's right to privacy. Private citizens are not covered by state statutes, called shield laws, that protect the tapes and notes of professional journalists.

A vivid example of how easy it is to cross the line between public and private behavior occurred in Florida in 1991, when Tampa homeowner Lee Adler videotaped his neighbors having sex inside their own condo. Adler claimed Alfred Stephens and Janet Paddock engaged in "lewd and lascivious" behavior only 10 feet away from children swimming in a pool. To prove it, he taped the couple through the blinds of their condo's window, then passed his tape to the local police.

Charges brought by the police against the couple were eventually dropped. They claimed, rightfully as it turned out, that Adler was trespassing under Florida's "peeping Tom" law. But that didn't end the incident. The court had to go to stop

Adler from attempting to sell his tape to national talk show hosts. Eventually, the couple won possession of the tape, provided it stays out of public view.

When a videotape is turned over for use as evidence, as in the Florida case, the law does establish some rules. "Anyone has the right to videotape something for their own use. This is called benign effect," says Goldman. "But once the tape ends up in the hands of law enforcement, you have to make sure there's no constitutional abuse. There have been cases where the police have asked people to videotape neighbors sus-

pected of illegal activity. At this point, you are no longer a private individual — you're an agent of a government office."

Videotaping for the law is one thing. Videotaping the law in action can be quite another. One day in May 1991, for example, police officers in Dayton, Ohio, were making a particularly physical arrest outside a hairdressing salon owned by Monica Meyer-Riggins, a local businesswoman. Meyer-Riggins grabbed a camcorder, stepped outside and videotaped the arrest. The police ordered her to "turn that damn camera off," according to Meyer-Riggins, then confiscated the camcorder and erased the potentially incriminating tape. Adding insult to injury, Meyer-Riggins was slapped with a jaywalking ticket for standing in the street while taping.

To keep their lives from resembling the kind of Hitchcock movie in which an innocent bystander is pulled into surreal circumstances, newshounds are well-advised to pack common sense and discretion along with batteries and tapes when wielding a camcorder. If a tape clearly places its maker in danger, he or she may be entitled to police protection or a restraining order. But by and large, a videomaker is fair game for anything, including requests for cooperation by police authorities.

SHOOTING THE KING TAPE

Even with the best of intentions, amateur videographers can never really be sure of what they may be getting into. George Holliday, the plumber who taped the Rodney King video, had never shot a minute of footage until he bought a new Sony 8mm camcorder just two weeks before that fateful March 3 evening. In fact, he recorded the King beating over scenes of his wife in their living room, the same kind of let's-try-this-thing-out footage most new camcorder owners

had. And they would call me later." Yet that evening, Holliday's video was headlining the nightly news. Without permission or any discussion of fees, KTLA had sent the tape to CNN, which passed it downstream to its affiliates. The footage was in the hands of the national media before Holliday knew what had happened.

Equally important, the station still had the original tape. Holliday had not made a safety copy, although it seems clear KTLA did in the time it took the station to fix its "equipment problems." Meanwhile, Holliday's tape practically passed into the public domain. Although CNN made an effort to pay Holliday its standard Newshound fee of \$150, Holliday is still mired in litigation over licensing fees which his attorney, Ronald W. Grigg, claims were never paid.

Grigg has sued KTLA, CNN and the three major networks, claiming they aired and distributed the tape without securing the right to do so, and sent more than 900 warning letters to networks and affiliates around the country advising them they were exploiting a copyrighted tape. Holliday's position is straightforward. "All rights that are not specifically conveyed in an agreement belong to the holder of the copyright, the person who shot the tape," says Grigg.

The primary issue for Grigg is protecting a possession that's become valuable. "In the case of a videotape, you want to license it," Grigg explains, adding a warning to videomakers: "If you communicate with media organizations and have a product they want, they'll often try to rely upon oral understandings. They'll try to negotiate with you later. If they get hold of your tape, they will argue they have a 'limited license' which grants them whatever they need to get

How taping Rodney King & the L.A. riots drew two video newshounds into a media whirlwind.

shoot as soon as they tear off the packing materials.

The idea that his video might be important didn't even occur to George Holliday. Two days passed before his wife convinced him the media might be interested. Holliday called KTLA, a local TV station. The station offered to take a look at his footage. Holliday ran it over and the merry-go-round began.

"They said they had some mechanical problems. They couldn't see it right away," recalls Holliday. "They wanted me to leave it so that they could view it when they fixed their equipment prob-

their job done. As far as price, everything is negotiable."

But money was only one of Holliday's problems. "After the tape aired, I started getting lots of telephone calls at home," Holliday says. "Mainly they were from other stations and reporters and a few citizens who wanted to tell me what a good job I'd done. I answered the phone in the beginning, but then the calls got overwhelming." Holliday also started getting mail, most positive. But there was enough negative mail to make his wife fear for their safety.

The L.A. police were also interested

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in talking to the man who had brought them under such intense scrutiny. "I had to go to the local police station and answer all their questions, then I had to go to downtown headquarters, then to the Internal Affairs department," says Holliday. "Then the FBI came in. They all had their own investigations going on."

Worse than the legal authorities, to Holliday's way of thinking, were the media. "The reporters were really tough in those first couple of weeks. It got to the point that I looked for some sort of help, like an attorney, to get some kind of protection from the media."

The publicity storm and the events that followed left Holliday with a deep suspicion of the mass media and the perceptions they create. As a witness to the beating, Holliday is uniquely qualified to compare the reality of what happened to what the rest of the world believe happened. "I'm very afraid now of the power the media has to distort something if they really want to," says Holliday. "It's hard for me to watch a news program and believe what they're saying."

When the riots broke out last April after the Simi Valley verdict, Holliday might well have regretted the day he bought the camcorder. "In the beginning, I felt very guilty. I thought I caused all this," Holliday reflects two years after that fateful evening, his life only now returning to normal. "But Los Angeles has a lot of underlying problems—economic, racial, whatever. If my tape hadn't existed, something else would have triggered the rioting."

INSIDE THE RIOTS

Unlike Holliday, Timothy Goldman thought he knew what he might be getting into when he shot footage of L.A. trucker Reginald Denny being dragged from his rig and beaten. An ex-Air Force captain and a video enthusiast, Goldman was driving toward South Central L.A. with his brother, Terry, and a cousin the day the riots broke out. "We had been recording all that day, just fooling around with camcorders, shooting the ladies more than anything else," says Goldman. "We were in a neighborhood south of the trouble spot when we heard over the [police] scanner that the police were requesting help. We drove over and saw a standoff between the police and the local residents. We just started shooting."

With the rage about to boil over into violence, Goldman and his companions would have had second thoughts about pointing a camcorder into the crowd had they lived elsewhere. But they lived nearby. "We were black and the locals knew us," says Goldman. "Some people on the streets told us to put the camcorder down, but others said, 'They're

from the neighborhood; leave them alone.'"

Left alone, Goldman, with the help of his companions, shot two hours of the most frightening footage imaginable, a document of such violence it makes most Hollywood concoctions pale by comparison. Because he lived only blocks from the scene, Goldman was able to run home and fetch extra tapes and batteries, which, like any savvy videographer, he had charged in advance.

That night, Goldman made copies of the footage, which had been shot in VHS, 8mm and VHS-C. The next day, he was back on the streets, shooting again. Gregory Sandoval, a journalism student, spotted Goldman shooting and asked if he had any footage from Florence and Normandy. This was the intersection at the center of the disorder, where Goldman caught the assault on Denny.

Sandoval looked at Goldman's tape and wrote a story for *The Daily Trojan*, the student newspaper of the University of Southern California. Other papers picked up the story, and Sandoval was soon fielding more than 40 requests for Goldman's tape. It took about a week before the first excerpts from Goldman's tape showed up on TV. With Sandoval—then, later, Grigg—as his agents, Goldman has earned more than \$80,000 in licensing fees for use of his tapes.

Goldman's story didn't end with his marketing coup. The tape's exposure generated considerable fallout. "For the first three days after the tape was released, the media wanted to know who I was," says Goldman. "I didn't do TV interviews because I felt less secure with TV than radio. Then I started hearing that people were out looking for me."

Goldman's footage was also being studied for use as evidence against alleged rioters by a joint task force of local, state and federal authorities. In fact, the task force was systematically working its way through a vast pile of more than 300 tapes of the riot shot by amateurs and professionals. After Goldman's video aired on KABC, even the FBI came calling. But since Goldman was keeping a low profile, the FBI couldn't reach him. Armed with a warrant, they raided his house and came away with his tapes.

To help identify figures spotted committing crimes in the tapes, Goldman participated in more than 20 court-ordered identification sessions. Ironically, at least one session involved his brother, Terry, who was caught by Timothy's camcorder in the act of looting a liquor store. He, too, became a target of the investigation.

"To some I was a hero," says Gold-

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ANSWER

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man. "I was helping to put bad guys in jail. But to others, I was a villain. I got people from the neighborhood arrested. For a while, everyone was after me." Including members of L.A.'s notorious street gangs, who did not take kindly to the situation.

As of this writing, Timothy Goldman is still in hiding and Terry is in jail, although not on the looting charge. While few looters were prosecuted, Timothy's tapes served as evidence in the trial of the men accused of beating Denny.

Meanwhile, Holliday's tape, which played key roles in both King trials, is turning into an icon of the '90s. Spike Lee used it in the opening credits of *Malcolm X*, and the prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City displayed it as a work of art in its 1993 Biennial Exhibition.

Few amateur tapes will ever achieve this level of impact or exposure. But videomakers cannot know this in the heat of shooting, or even immediately after. Perhaps the best advice for newshounds comes from the ACLU's Goldman, who cautions that what your camcorder sees isn't necessarily the whole story. "You're getting just one angle, and the videomaker's bias is always reflected on the

tape," she says. "Just because you can see a picture or hear a voice, that doesn't mean it's the truth." ■

SURROUND

continued from page 57

We noted a slight edginess in the upper range of voices, but we think this effect was caused by the lack of grilles on the prototypes we tried. Grilles will be supplied with the production versions of the speakers. They'll attenuate higher frequencies by a decibel or so, and should solve the problem. Even without grilles, the SoundEffects speakers produce more natural-sounding voices than many very expensive high-end speakers.

If you've been putting off the purchase of a home theater sound system because you're turned off by the complexity, or don't want your precious living space invaded by a flock of huge boxes, SoundEffects could change your mind. We're amazed at the thought and innovation JBL put into this system, and we're impressed that the company put so much effort into making SoundEffects sound as great as it looks. ■

ELITE

continued from page 54

door to achieve the clean, uncluttered appearance of top high-end audio gear.

Like the Yamaha, Onkyo's TX-SV909PRO receiver emphasizes the benefits of DSP. Two "Theater Surround" modes offer perks like a "digital bass enhancer" function that boosts the bass, simulating a subwoofer. Onscreen maps allow adjustment of the quantity and placement patterns of multiple simulated surround speakers — through the magic of DSP — in simulated theaters of seven sizes. In addition, the 909 is equipped to power two real "front enhance" speakers, just like the Yamaha. Three music surround modes are also compatible with the seven-channel configuration. Ambisonic Surround, a unique four-channel music system licensed from England's Nimbus Records, harkens back to the days of quadraphonic sound. With an optional remote sensor, the 909 can control most Onkyo components from another room — add a remote emitter, and other brands can also be controlled. A Toslink optical input offers a direct digital connection from many CD and laserdisc players.

In both stereo and Pro-Logic modes, the 909 delivered punchy, dramatic sound. We found its two-channel and Pro-Logic performance a little harsh



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when using a combi player routed through the 909's analog inputs, but the problem disappeared when we made a direct optical digital connection. We were very pleased with the DSP modes — "Theater 1" offered spacious sound without interfering with delicate sound placement across the front. The Ambisonic Surround was remarkably realistic and musical, but requires special Ambisonic CDs for full effect. The 909's front panel isn't quite as striking as those of the Yamaha and Mitsubishi, but it's more practical — the large display can be seen from across the room and individual buttons allow instant access to sources.

Mitsubishi's HTS-300 focuses principally on ease of use and elegance of design. These qualities are most apparent in its extraordinary remote control, which lights up for use in dark home theaters and has an LCD display that indicates which component is being controlled. It has three music surround modes, but no DSP movie modes. Its multiroom functions let you watch or listen to a selected source in another room, but when the HTS-300 is combined with other Mitsubishi A/V network products, you can select a different source from a second room and control the receiver from that room. The owner's manual is a 165-page oversized paperback with amazingly clear and helpful diagrams and instructions. If you've never hooked up a home theater before, this manual will get you through it with little or no trouble.

The HTS-300 won our hearts at the beginning of the high-end listening test with its exceptional two-channel stereo sound. Its sweet and detailed music reproduction was the best we heard in our A/V receiver tests. We found its Pro-Logic and music-mode performance respectable, but similar to that of the best midpriced receivers we tried. The on-screen menu system seemed a little confusing at first, but we warmed to it after minimal exposure. We were very surprised to discover that the HTS-300 has a cooling fan that audibly cuts off whenever a source signal is interrupted, such as when skipping tracks on a CD. Some may find it bothersome.

Overall, we were very pleased with the performance of these machines — we found that you do get what you pay for in home theater's rarefied high end. But we strongly suggest you audition these models yourself before settling on a favorite. Spend enough time to get a feel for each, and don't be afraid to ask questions. You should expect an investment of this size to pay off with years of enjoyment — but only if you're willing to find out which model is just right for you. ■

TECH TIPS

Microprocessor mix-ups

For various reasons, the microprocessor brain of a VCR can get "mixed up" so that it won't permit normal operation. More often than not, all that is required to fix this is to unplug the VCR from the wall socket, wait a minute and plug it back in. When a VCR is plugged in, a reset signal is fed to the microprocessor, which restores it to factory settings. In some VCRs, this may require resetting the clock and channel scan.

W.R. McCarty
Scottsdale, Arizona

Communications made cheap

A low-cost intercom system can make complicated video shoots easier — you can direct camera operators without others hearing. An easy way to make an intercom is to get an old receiver with a

built-in eight-track or cassette tape recorder, hook up a microphone, and connect one or more sets of headphones to the headphone jack. You can tell camera operators wearing the headphones what shots to get and if they are "live."

Zach Dandert
Greeley, Colorado

Mic madness

By using two mics with a stereo camcorder, you stand a better chance of catching all the important sounds. For weddings, use a tripod-mounted mic for ambient sound, and a wireless mic on the groom or clergyman. Use a dual-mono to stereo adapter to plug one mic into the left channel camcorder mic input, and the other into the right channel. For playback, plug the camcorder's output into an audio mixer so you can blend the ambient and direct sounds to your liking. Be careful, though — you might want to delete some of the "off-stage" comments made by the groom and clergymen, which can be embarrassing!

James R.C. Adams
North Manchester, Indiana

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RECEIVER

continued from page 54

Marantz receivers. It uses digital signal processing to create many music surround modes, plus a widescreen mode that combines Pro-Logic with ambience synthesis to make your living room sound more like a theater. Each of these modes is adjustable—you can simulate different room sizes, select left plus right or left minus right surround decoding, and tweak the sound in other ways depending on the mode selected.

Unfortunately, much of this was wasted on us because we didn't enjoy the two-channel music sound of the AVR-3000. It sounded a bit lean, with an overemphasized treble. Using the CD direct mode, which deactivates all unnecessary circuitry, seemed to make the sound worse. Its DSP music surround modes were rather pleasant. Had it sounded better in two-channel mode, the music modes might have been stellar. Surprisingly, the Pro-Logic sound was smooth and powerful. The wide-screen mode added a nice ambience for movies, although we didn't care for the mono movie mode.

We had no problem at all using the AVR-3000. The front panel has all the controls you need, the back panel hook-up is self-explanatory, and the remote control buttons are differentiated with bright red, white and blue backgrounds.

THE NAKAMICHI AV-1

The AV-1 is similar to the Carver and Marantz receivers, although a notch down in the feature department. It has no front-panel inputs, but if you don't own an 8mm or Hi8 camcorder, you'll probably never miss them.

We thoroughly enjoyed the sweet sound of the AV-1 on two-channel music. The music surround modes left much to be desired. With careful tweaking of rear-speaker level and delay, we improved them, but not by much. Its Pro-Logic sound strained on the *Wow* disc intro—a room-shaking crescendo of synthesized sound—and couldn't produce the punch dealt by most of the other receivers. But that's only a problem on the loudest passages of action movies. On Madonna's first tune from *Dick Tracy*, it sounded gorgeous.

Operationally, the AV-1 is pretty much like the Carver and Marantz receivers, although its remote control layout is a bit more sensible, and it has automatic input level control.

THE HARMAN-KARDON AVR30

With its unconventional front panel layout, the AVR30 is the most unusual

of the receivers we tried. Unlike the others, the center-channel level must be set from the front panel. Some videophiles like this setup, but because it practically requires use of a helper or a sound pressure level meter, we consider it less convenient. However, the AVR30 has one offsetting convenience—a subwoofer level control that lets you control a powered subwoofer from the front panel.

The two-channel music sound had a distinct edge—this helped make the orchestral instruments of the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2 more distinct, but rock CDs like *Floored Genius: The Best of Julian Cope* sounded fatiguing. The music surround modes offered little potential for adjustment, but sounded good. The Pro-Logic sound was also good, but this receiver isn't quite as powerful as the others—50 watts in each front channel in Pro-Logic mode. The *Wow* disc intro sounded somewhat strained. However, few movies reach such high levels, and only briefly at that. The movie mode added a pleasant theater simulation to the Pro-Logic—we'd probably leave it on all the time—but the mono mode sounded too echoey.

The AVR30 comes with two remotes. One provides full access to the receivers' functions and controls other Harman-Kardon equipment. The other is a system remote. It controls several components of various brands, plus most of the AVR30's features. The receiver is easy to set up and operate, thanks largely to its onscreen displays.

THE YAMAHA RX-V1070

We've been impressed with Yamaha's recent home theater electronics. They're remarkable for their deliberate, clean digital sound—a quality carried over into the RX-V1070. It sounds great on Pro-Logic and two-channel music, with plenty of power and a balanced, clean sound. On music, it created a realistic soundstage, but with a polite high end—cymbals lacked sparkle.

On Pro-Logic, it produced a wonderful ambience, with full, punchy bass. The music surround modes sounded very good, but offered little adjustability. Its enhanced Pro-Logic mode produced great theater ambience, although we found its 70mm mode produces such a big sound that it can be distracting.

We didn't have any problems at all operating the RX-V1070. Its color-coded remote has unusually shaped controls for volume and delay time, making it easy to operate by feel and in a dark room. We think you'd have to buy separate components—and spend double the money—to get a significant improvement in performance.

continued on page 80

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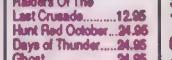
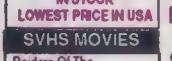
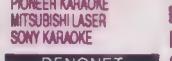
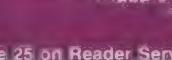
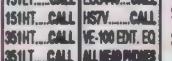
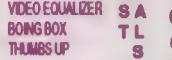
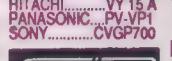
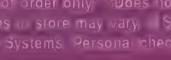
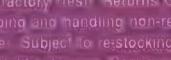
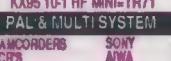
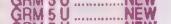
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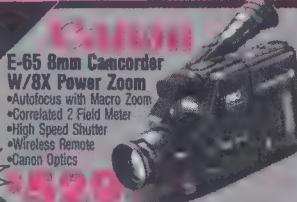
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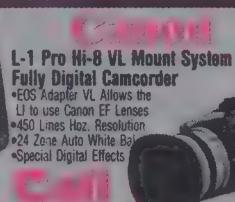
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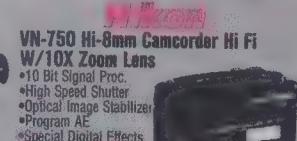
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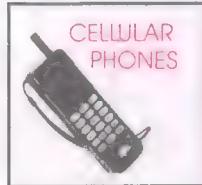
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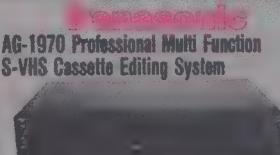
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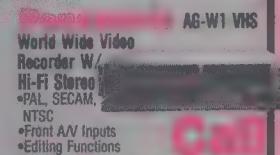
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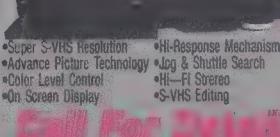
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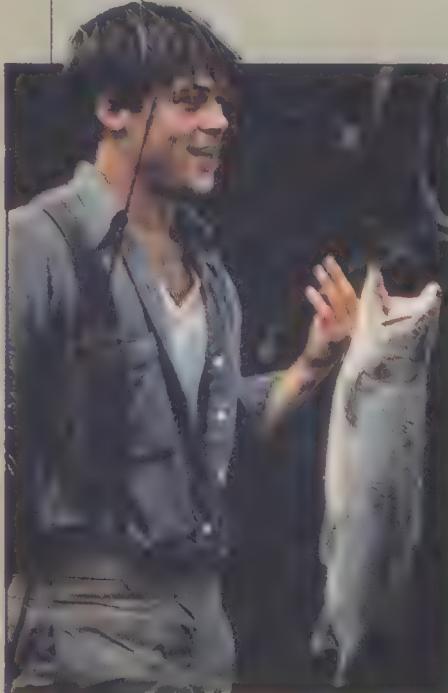
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TAPES & DISCS

NEW RELEASES



Fish Story: Brad Pitt elevates the sport of fly fishing to high art in *A River Runs Through It*.



FEATURE FILMS

A River Runs Through It

1992. Craig Sheffer, Brad Pitt, Tom Skerritt; dir. Robert Redford. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 124 min. priced for rental. LD letterboxed \$39.95. Columbia TriStar.

Norman Maclean's autobiographical novella *A River Runs Through It* tells of his Montana family in the first part of this century. Robert Redford's film version is his best piece of direction to date, a tightly controlled and quietly perceptive expression of family life and his concern for what we have lost in the name of progress.

The Maclean brothers, Norman (Craig Sheffer) and Paul (Brad Pitt), learn reading, religion and fly fishing,

not necessarily in that order, from their minister father (Tom Skerritt). While Norman grows up serious and studious, Paul becomes an artist with the rod and reel. But Paul's determination to prove himself tougher than anyone is getting him into trouble, especially with gambling and drinking. And his unresolved rivalry with his brother keeps him from accepting Norman's help.

Redford transports us into "a world with dew still on it," a land that is still nearly wilderness, captured beautifully in the Oscar-winning photography of Philippe Rousselot. The setting, and the tenderly observed details of family life, mitigate against melodrama in favor of something quieter. The acting is mostly fine, with Pitt, in the role every young actor in Hollywood was frantic for, as the obvious centerpiece. And if the fina-

le seems calculated to reduce the audience to amorphous gloop, the emotion has been honestly earned.

The photography, with its fine play of light and shadow, has been served surprisingly well by the tape. A letterboxed disc is forthcoming, but the proposed Criterion edition has been canceled.

—Sol Louis Siegel

Glengarry Glen Ross

1992. Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, Alec Baldwin; dir. James Foley. Hi-fi stereo. (R) 100 min. \$94.98. LD letterboxed or pan-and-scan \$34.95. LIVE.

For whatever reasons, movies with a surplus of creative talent often fail to live up to their potentials. That's not the case with *Glengarry Glen Ross*, adapted from David Mamet's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a group of salesmen desperately fighting to hold onto their soul-killing jobs pushing worthless real estate.

Times are tough, and the office is told that whoever sells the least this month will be out of a job. Hotshot Ricky Roma (Al Pacino) isn't worried. Not only is he the office's top salesman, but by virtue of that position he gets the best leads. Less secure, Dave Moss (Ed

Save the Tiger: *Glengarry Glen Ross* salesman Shelley Levene (Jack Lemmon) hangs on by a thread.



EDITOR'S CHOICE



kenneth korman



Age of Discovery: Polly Walker and company find their true selves during one *Enchanted April*.

E.M. Forster stories doesn't end there. Adapted from the novel by Elizabeth von Arnim, a contemporary of Forster's, *Enchanted April* stars Miranda Richardson, Josie Lawrence, Polly Walker and Joan Plowright as four strangers who agree to share a secluded Italian castle for the month of April. Away from the stifling demands of British propriety, they come to see where their lives went astray, and realize that it is within their power to be happy again.

Even the male characters, husbands of two of the women, are revitalized when they reluctantly come to visit. (In smaller roles, Alfred Molina and Jim Broadbent hold their own with the female stars.) Director Mike Newell makes the most of a gorgeous setting, the same Portofino castle that inspired von Arnim's book. Less ambitious than Forster's tales, *Enchanted April* is a delightful fable without a mean moment in it. —MF

Trespass

1992. Ice T, Ice Cube, Bill Paxton; dir. Walter Hill. Hi-fi surround. (R) 101 min. priced for rental. LD \$34.98. MCA/Universal.

Originally called *Looters*, *Trespass* was retitled and its theatrical release delayed last year, reportedly to avoid provoking audiences in the wake of the Los Angeles riots. In retrospect, it's hard to see the concern. A mindless orgy of guns



Life Imitates Art: The release of *Trespass* was delayed last year due to the Los Angeles riots.

and bombs, Walter Hill's actionfest pits black against white, but there's virtually no political content, with both sides portrayed as unsympathetic cartoon characters. While the director displayed a flair for similar hard-boiled material in *48 HRS.* and *The Warriors*, this time he comes up short.

In fairness, Hill's stuck with a pretty

So many "special edition" tapes and discs flood stores these days, it's easy to become blasé about yet another new and improved home video. But don't let that keep you from seeing **Blade Runner: The Director's Cut** (Warner, VHS \$39.99). Though it seemed a masterpiece in its original form, *Blade Runner* now moves even closer to perfection. While most special editions rely on new footage, this film has been enhanced largely by the omission of familiar elements.

Shortly before its theatrical release in 1982, *Blade Runner* was tested before preview audiences ex-

pecting another lighthearted Harrison Ford adventure, like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. After a lukewarm response, those who backed the expensive production pushed to soften director Ridley Scott's disturbing vision of a future gone terribly wrong. One short dream sequence was deleted, and lengthy narration and a happy ending were added before its release. The *Director's Cut*, which played in 150 theaters last year, restores *Blade Runner* to its prerelease form.

Minus the extraneous narration and ending, the movie's many strengths come to the fore. Its unique rhythm and feel can be savored without distraction, and the still-unparalleled special effects, set designs and cinematography appear more spellbinding than ever. The dream sequence, which links to the final scene of the *Director's Cut*, adds another layer of mystery and meaning.

The video release also marks the first time any version of the film has been available letterboxed on cassette. Despite its much-reduced picture area, the new transfer works fine on VHS. A fair comparison with Criterion's disc-only letterboxed transfer of the original-release version won't be possible until Warner's \$49.98 CAV laser *Director's Cut* arrives this summer. Barring disaster, the new disc should stand as the year's most indispensable video release. ■



Blade Runner

Harris) hatches a vengeful scheme against the firm and tries to talk his partner George Aaronow (Alan Arkin) into joining him. Hardest hit is Shelley "The Machine" Levene (Jack Lemmon), once the office star but now riding a long luckless streak. As the one with the most to lose, he's willing to resort to the most desperate measures.

Even more than Mamet's other plays, *Glengarry Glen Ross* is known for its rapid-fire dialog — idiomatic, comically profane and precise, with no leeway for improvisation. It's a talky play, but one that invites the viewer to luxuriate in its language. And this ensemble cast (which also includes Alec Baldwin, Kevin Spacey and Jonathan Pryce) makes the most of it, wringing the juices out of Mamet's bitter dissection of the soullessness of selling. —MF

Enchanted April

1992. Joan Plowright, Miranda Richardson; dir. Mike Newell. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (PG) 93 min. priced for rental. LD \$34.95. Paramount.

Hollywood may be unable to provide worthy parts for actresses, but on the basis of recent evidence, the British film industry has no such problem. Like *Howards End* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *Enchanted April* is bursting with marvelous female characters, and fills them with a quartet of exceptional actresses.

The similarity to those and other

TAPES & DISCS

implausible premise. Two Arkansas firemen (Bill Paxton and William Sadler) search for stolen gold in an abandoned building in East St. Louis, where they run afoul of a savage crimelord (Ice T) and his trigger-happy henchmen (Ice Cube, et al.). After the country boys take refuge in a nearly impregnable room, the gangsters mount a deadly siege. However, there's little tension in the long standoff, which climaxes in carnage, of course. All concerned struggle valiantly with overheated dialog, though rappers Ice T and Ice Cube both play villains more convincingly on their records. *Trespass* proves that brutality can be bland.

—Jon Young

The Distinguished Gentleman

1992. Eddie Murphy, Charles S. Dutton; dir. Jonathan Lynn. Hi-fi stereo. (R) 112 min. \$94.95. LD \$39.99. Hollywood Pictures.

If *The Distinguished Gentleman* marks an upturn in Eddie Murphy's creative fortunes, that's more a reflection of his recent career doldrums than the sign of a genuine artistic triumph. A mild-mannered comedy with aspirations to political satire, this rambling farce chronicles the exploits of Jeff Johnson (Murphy), a

Frank Capra would have applauded his spirit, however lukewarm the results.

The leisurely style of director Jonathan Lynn, which suited *My Cousin Vinny* nicely, wastes the energetic leading man and underscores the predictability of the plot. While Murphy's still got the best laugh in movies and brilliantly mimics everyone from Jewish geriatrics to pretentious intellectuals, even he can't jumpstart this creaky star vehicle all alone. Ironically, there's a first-rate supporting cast including James Garner, Joe Don Baker, Grant Shaud, Charles Dutton and Sheryl Lee Ralph, but they're kept in the background while the hero basks in the spotlight. Eddie Murphy remains a prisoner of his own success.

—JY

The Adjuster

1991. Elias Koteas, Arsinee Khanjian, Maury Chaykin; wr./dir. Atom Egoyan. Hi-fi stereo. (R) 102 min. \$79.98. Orion.

Noah (Elias Koteas), the title character of *The Adjuster*, is an insurance man who gives all of himself to his burned-out clients, though these relationships end when their claims are settled. He isn't nearly as intimate with his wife Hera (Arsinee Khanjian), a government censor. Isolated from each other, they also live isolated from the world in the sample home of an unfinished development. The world's malaise finds them anyway, in the person of Bubba (Maury Chaykin), a rich game-player working on his ultimate fantasy.

The Canadian director Atom Egoyan makes movies that entertain by their very pretentiousness. His black comedies of modern people trapped in their own little worlds are full of portents, ironies, enigmas and hidden meanings. I don't think he communicates as much as he thinks he does—but then again, neither do his characters. His deceptively cool and clinical style is certainly unique, and his sense of how people isolate themselves through the very rituals that are supposed to bring them closer improves with each new film.

The tape, unfortunately, is the most obviously panned-and-scanned I've seen in a while. Since it may be a long wait for a letterboxed disc, you'll just have to make the mental adjustments as you go along. A big compensation is that the complex, insinuating soundtrack is very nicely reproduced.

—SLS



Capitol Crime: *Distinguished Gentleman* Eddie Murphy takes his comedy act to the U.S. Congress.

scam artist who gets elected to Congress through a combination of luck and fraud. Though he plans on cashing in like other government crooks, Johnson changes his tune after seeing the consequences of official corruption and sets out to expose the entrenched powers.



Livin' for the City: Nick Gomez's *Laws of Gravity*.

Laws of Gravity

1992. Adam Trese, Peter Greene; dir. Nick Gomez. Hi-fi mono. (R) 100 min. \$89.95. Triboro.

While independent filmmakers with tiny budgets generally deserve the benefit of the doubt, Nick Gomez requires no special consideration: The writer-director of *Laws of Gravity* has crafted a stark, arresting drama about urban losers and the damage they do. In the tradition of Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, this lively tale follows the daily rounds of petty criminals Jimmy (Peter Greene) and Jon (Adam Trese, who could pass for Tom Cruise's dumber brother). Happily married to the level-headed Denise (Edie Falco), Jimmy makes a token stab at leading a stable existence, but Jon screws up constantly, whether hitting his girlfriend Celia (Arabella Field) or incurring the wrath of the law for minor offenses. Enter a gun dealer (Paul Schuize) with a short fuse, and lives on the brink tumble into the abyss. Between the raw, energetic acting and low-tech camera work, *Laws of Gravity* has the immediacy of an electric shock. —JY

The Man Who Fell to Earth

1976. David Bowie, Buck Henry; dir. Nicolas Roeg. Digital stereo. (NR) 139 min. CAV 3 sides/CLV 1 side. \$99.98. Criterion.

The Man Who Fell to Earth is Thomas Jerome Newton (David Bowie),

a refugee from a dying planet who attempts to parlay his advanced scientific knowledge into the capital necessary to rescue his stranded family. But Newton succeeds only in piquing the "interest" of the most sinister power brokers on this side of the ozone layer. Ultimately broken, he loses himself in a lost light-year of alcoholic haze.

Earth is almost magnificent in the scope of its failure: Director Nicolas Roeg's layered approach to storytelling (used brilliantly in earlier films like *Performance*, *Walkabout* and *Don't Look Now*) inverts what should be a tense thriller into a swampy sci-fi pudding. Bowie's stoned and fragile presence is a dramatic black hole, while intriguing performances by Rip Torn, Candy Clark and Buck Henry simply drift in the zero-gravity storyline.

On the plus side, Criterion presents a stunning letterboxed transfer of the film in its original European cut (the U.S. theatrical release was trimmed by some 20 minutes) and scads of supplementary material, including an analog audio track pairing Roeg and Bowie in a jocular commentary reminiscent of *Mystery Science Theater*. To their credit, Roeg and Bowie don't shy away from detailing the film's weaknesses, thus taking advantage of a second chance to tell the story *The Man Who Fell to Earth* was intended to convey.

—John Walker

Space Oddity:
With a little extra make-up, David Bowie becomes *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.



Call It Home: The House That Private Enterprise Built

1992. Pr. Keller Easterling, Richard Prelinger. Digital mono. (NR) 56 min. CAV 2 sides. \$49.95. Voyager.

Television Toys: Commercials From the '50s and '60s

1992. Pr. Ira Gallen. Digital mono. (NR) 108 min. CLV 2 sides. \$49.95. Voyager.

The American Dream is one of those mythologies that's subject to interpretation. Ask a Haitian immigrant and a Wall Street investor for their definitions, and you'll get two very different replies. But the post-World War II years probably offered the most seductive vision of the American way of life—every man a king, complete with his own castle and plentiful leisure.

That dream is dispassionately re-enacted on these two interactive discs from Voyager. *Call It Home* is an elaborate visual essay on the creation of suburbia, the sparkling bedroom communities that symbolized progress and modernity. As you step through it, you're moved by the nobility of the idea—a home for everyone, with parks and back yards, good schools and jobs, cars in the garage and apple pie cooling on the windowsill.

dow ledge. It's not for nothing that these images are still powerful political signifiers to this day.

Television Toys takes the nostalgia further, and is the dark underside of *Call It Home*. Hidden beneath the cheery exhortations of "Hey kids!..." are the none-too-subtle messages of conformity



and envy that make for a good mass market. To watch these commercials is to witness the genesis of the violence, sexism and mindless consumption that grown-up baby boomers are now trying to live down.

Whether intended or not, these discs serve as both a celebration and critique of the capitalist system. Together, they make for a compelling history lesson which should be required viewing in every high-school civics class.

—Ron Goldberg

The Man Who Came to Dinner

1942. B&W. Monty Woolley, Bette Davis; dir. William Keighley. Digital mono. (NR) 113 min. \$34.98. MGM/UA.

Author and radio personality Sheridan Whiteside is a man of charm. When his hostess prepares calf's-foot jelly for him, his gracious response is: "Made from your own foot, I have no doubt." Whiteside (Monty Woolley) then proceeds to wrap his nurse around his little finger by dubbing her "Miss Stomach Pump," and endear himself to the rest of the household by declaring, "Dr. Bradley is the greatest living argument for mercy killing."

But the medical staff are necessary, because Whiteside is *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and never left, thanks to

TAPES & DISCS



Body of Evidence:
The plot thickens once again with *JFK: The Director's Cut*.

tumble on the ice outside his host's home. This guest is devilishly nasty—and positively hilarious: Thanks to the acid-tongued Broadway play from George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, and breakneck pacing from director William Keighley (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*), the one-liners never stop.

When Whiteside's secretary (Bette Davis, a.k.a. "Little Miss Vitriol") falls for a local yokel, the boss's machinations bring actress Lorraine Sheldon (Ann Sheridan, or the "Countess de Cyanide")—and her histrionics—to Melsalia, Ohio. Then comes the womanizing Banjo (Jimmy Durante). Then it really gets interesting...

This good-looking disc could not be recommended more highly. But be careful: You'll laugh so hard you could need medical attention.

—April P. Bernard



Hell on Wheels: Monty Woolley (left) is *The Man Who Came to Dinner*—and breakfast, and lunch...

JFK: The Director's Cut

1992. Kevin Costner, Tommy Lee Jones; dir. Oliver Stone. Digital surround, letterboxed, cc. Also included: *Beyond JFK—The Question of Conspiracy*. (R) 206 min. 10 sides: 8 CAV, 2 CLV. \$149.98. Warner.

Oliver Stone's *JFK* is now available in a special limited-edition boxed set that serves up an additional 17 minutes of footage as well as a supplemental documentary titled *Beyond JFK—The Question of Conspiracy*. Some may say, "Great. Seventeen extra minutes of hearsay!" And in truth, *JFK* would benefit from a trim, even if you buy most of Stone's conspiracy premise. But this CAV laserdisc allows those who accept the film for what it is—a kitchen sink compendium of every *JFK* conspiracy theory from the past 30 years—to enjoy

the many near-subliminal tidbits that permeate Stone's work. Details like a split-second view of accused conspirator Clay Shaw watching from a distance as Oswald scraps with Cuban nationals in New Orleans, or a fellow who looks suspiciously like Guy Bannister giving orders at Kennedy's autopsy, will afford chills you may have missed during the film's theatrical run.

The supplement program, *Beyond JFK—The Question of Conspiracy*, looks more like an infomercial for *JFK* than a hard-hitting documentary, but it does have interesting footage of the real-life characters who populate the movie, and to its credit, presents a fairly balanced selection of viewpoints.

—JW

The Uninvited

1944. B&W. Ray Milland, Ruth Hussey; dir. Lewis Allen. Digital mono. (NR) 99 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.95. MCA/Universal.

The Uninvited is a miraculously fine ghost story that mixes terror, eroticism, humor, guilt and romance in a manner extraordinary for its era. Ray Milland and sister Ruth Hussey learn that their Cornish mansion is haunted by the ghosts of two women (which, fortunately, never "appear" on screen). This phenomenon is somehow linked to a neighbor (Gail Russell) and her mother, who died three years before. Director Lewis Allen handled this delicate story of murder and madness with unusual restraint, creating a movie similar to—and, in some ways, better than—Hitchcock's classic *Rebecca*.

MCA's Encore Edition disc is good but unexceptional, with a blemish-free (though sometimes too grainy) transfer and an analog track louder than its digital track. The disc's appeal lies with the movie itself—its focus on the dark side of romance and family relations nearly shifts it into the film noir category. Russell is a haunting ingenue, and Donald Crisp gives one of his best performances as her tormented grandfather.

—Bruce Eder

CLASSICS

Laura

1944. B&W. Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, Clifton Webb, Vincent Price; dir. Otto Preminger. (NR) 88 min. \$19.95. FoxVideo.

FoxVideo's Studio Classic series has hit its stride with this long-awaited reissue. *Laura* is uncut on videocassette for the first time here, and the three minutes of restored footage contain vital psychological information on a key character. The new VHS edition uses the same transfer as the 1991 laserdisc, and this works to its advantage—the Oscar-winning cinematography is presented with acceptable sharpness and above-average contrast, and the sound is clean and clear.

The movie holds up admirably after a half-century. Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney) is a top New York advertising executive who has (apparently) been murdered. She becomes the object of obsession for tough cop Dana Andrews, who hunts for the killer and finds himself caught in a bizarre love triangle with "eccentric" writer Clifton Webb.

Tierney just puts across the haunting beauty of the title character, and Andrews was at his best as the tough, occasionally sadistic detective. Webb achieved stardom with a difficult role. David Raksin's title theme is justifiably one of the world's most recorded pieces of popular music, and the decadent upper-class 1940's New York setting is nearly as intoxicating as the soundtrack. The reissue trailer (which does not appear on the laserdisc) is a nice bonus: Apart from being one of the better-edited trailers of its era, it gives yet another run-through of that title theme.

—BE



SPECIAL INTEREST

Kurt Vonnegut's Monkey House

1992. Len Cariou, Frank Langella; dirs. Allan King, Paul Shapiro, Gilbert Shilton, Wayne Tourell. Hi-fi mono, cc. (NR) 100 min. \$79.95. Pacific Arts.

Culled from a seven-episode series that debuted on the Showtime cable service last year, this anthology of four mini-movies adapted from Vonnegut's short fiction is a remarkably satisfying showcase of the author's early work.

Each of the episodes is built around a single, out-of-the-ordinary concept, such as a black box that transmits a numbing euphoria, or a woman kept alive as all her body parts below her neck are converted into machinery. The source material, written before Vonnegut developed his trademark singsong, is translated into provocative video explorations of each situation.

The best of the four stories has a U.S. ambassador (Len Cariou) held hostage by communist guerrillas in an unnamed country and forced to play a game of chess to win freedom for himself and his fellow hostages. The catch is that the ambassador's pieces are actually him and the other prisoners, including his wife and son; each time he loses a piece, that player is taken out and shot. Updated nicely from a 40-year-old story, the disturbing episode makes you wonder whether the right side won the Cold War.

Monkey House — introduced by Vonnegut in a non-sinister Rod Serling-type role — indicates that the author would have made a mean contributor to *The Twilight Zone*. —George Mannes

How to Irritate People

1968. John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Michael Palin, Connie Booth; dir. Ian Fordyce. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 65 min. \$19.95. White Star.

Monty Python's *Flying Circus* archivists will be thrilled with this discovery, a little-seen 1968 TV collection of pre-Python Pythonesque sketches. Generally more straightforward and less zany than those of the *Flying Circus*, these bits are all introduced by host Cleese in the deadpan manner of a typical "how to" guide. The targets include parents who

talk while you're trying to watch TV, insufferably polite boyfriends and groveling waiters.

The spots themselves are uneven, ranging from very funny to dull, but there are some amazing curiosities: the prototype for the famous "Dead Parrot" sketch (this time, a man tries to return an obviously faulty car instead of an obviously dead parrot), the first appearance of the shrill pepperpot-shaped women (played by men in drag) and a weirdly funny job interview sketch that was revived, recast and redone almost verbatim in the *Python* show itself.

Through it all, Cleese acts as a commentator, mocking the self-help industry with the aplomb of a man who would later transform suppressed rage and passive aggression into a hilarious art form. *How to Irritate People* may not be top-notch comedy, but it is a wonderful look at genius in the making. —Tom Soter

Twisted Toons: The Warped Animation of Bill Plympton

1993. Pr. Anthony Arcidi. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 60 min. \$29.95. Renegade Films (508-371-1916).

In the era of high-tech animation, cartoonist Bill Plympton has penciled a niche for himself as MTV's raw "alternative" animator. *Twisted Toons* is a charmingly unpretentious documentary about Plympton and the making of his feature *The Tune*, as well as an excellent introduction to the artist's traditional, hand-drawn animation technique. There's

nary a Macintosh in sight as Plympton animates his elastic-faced characters the old-fashioned way. Going beyond technique, *Twisted Toons* is also a pleasant primer on the business of animation, and should inspire anyone who ever had a pencil, a mound of tracing paper and a dream. —JW

A Journey to Spirit Island

1992. Bettina, Brandon Douglas; dir. Laszlo Pal. Hi-fi stereo. (PG) 93 min. \$89.95. Academy Storyline.

You'd be hard pressed to find a more politically correct family film than this one, in which a strong female protagonist and her friends fight to preserve a Native American burial ground from the encroachment of evil land developers. You'd also be lucky to find a film that succeeds better as true all-ages entertainment.

The young cast shines, especially Bettina as the Indian teen-ager and Brandon Douglas as the visiting city boy who helps her appreciate her near-mystical powers. They're likable, believable teens caught up in an adventure that has its share of genuine suspense without resorting to shock tactics.

As filmed by Vilmos Zsigmond, who worked on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the film has an extra bonus in its beautiful Pacific Northwestern scenery, a far cry from the cheezy production values seen in the kid movie matinees of our youth. —Marianne Meyer

Re-Animator:
Bill Plympton creates cartoons like this one the old-fashioned way—by hand.



DIRECTORY

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

The Cartoons That Time Forgot

1993 comp. B&W/color. 7 vols. '30s cartoons — five volumes from independent producer Ub Iwerks, two from the Van Beuren Studios — with *Flip the Frog*, *Molly Moo Cow*, *Willie Whopper* and even a 1934 *Aladdin*. Mono. 73-80 min. each. VHS only, \$24.95 each. Kino (800-562-3330).

Flirting

1992. Noah Taylor, Thandie Newton, Nicole Kidman; dir. John Duigan. Critics were charmed by this Aussie drama of interracial romance between a Sartre-worshipping prep-schooler and a South African free spirit. Surround, cc. (NR) 99 min. VHS \$94.95. LD \$34.95. Vidmark.

The Graduate

1967. Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft, Katharine Ross; dir. Mike Nichols. Here's to the 25th-anniversary edition, with extras. Mono, letterboxed. (R) 107 min. LD \$39.99. New Line.

The Honeymooners

1955-56. B&W. 10 vols. A Kramden collec-



tor's dream: all 39 full-length episodes, with the final 10 volumes available in October. Mono. Approx. 60 min. each. VHS only, Vol. 1 \$5.98, subsequent volumes \$9.98 each. CBS.

Hugh Hefner: Once Upon a Time

1992. Nar. James Coburn; dir. Robert Heath. Compelling portrait of the quintessential playboy, produced by *Twin Peaks* co-creators David Lynch and Mark Frost. Stereo. (NR) 91 min. VHS \$89.95. LD \$34.99. Uni/Image Entertainment.

Intervista

1993. Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg; wr./dir. Federico Fellini. Film-within-a-film

Labels For Less

Columbia TriStar and New Line titles are busting out all over, with dreamy Fabian in *Ride the Wild Surf*, the musical *My Sister Eileen* (both new to video), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and *House Party 2* — all \$19.95 each — and *Pump Up the Volume*, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* and *The 10th Victim* now \$14.95 each. And springing out of Paramount, the actioner *Hit!* is new to video at \$14.95; *Soapdish* and the irresistible *Hear My Song* have been reduced to \$19.95 each, with *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* now \$14.95.

The MGM musical still lives, with eight new \$19.98 titles — like *Going Hollywood*, *Holiday in Mexico*, *Smilin' Through* and *Yolanda and the Thief* — plus *That's Dancing!* reduced to the same price. But the sound you hear at MCA/Universal is laughter, from seven new-to-video Bob Hope flicks — including *College Swing*, *My Favorite Blonde* and *Ghost Breakers* — for \$14.95 each.

Criterion's latest half-price CLV laserdisc re-release is Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons*, \$49.95....Five CBS/Fox "NBA All-Star Performers" have been repriced to \$9.98 apiece....Shhh! *Comic Book Confidential* is now \$14.95 from Pacific Arts....Turner's *Gunga Din*, *The Big Sky* and *The Thing (From Another World)*, black-and-white or colorized, can be had for \$14.98 each. —APP

Shall We Dance:
Cary Grant and
Douglas Fairbanks Jr.
lead in *Gunga Din*.



**Smokin' In
the Boys Room:**
*Hugh Hefner: Once
Upon a Time* reveals
the Hef of yesteryear.

premise celebrates the magic of the movies. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 108 min. VHS only, \$89.95. Triboro.

Little Big Man

1970. Dustin Hoffman, Faye Dunaway, Martin Balsam; dir. Arthur Penn. 121-year-old Jack Crabb spins a colorful yarn of his past: Indian fighter, friend to Buffalo Bill, survivor of Custer's last stand and more. Mono, cc. (PG) 149 min. LD \$69.98. Fox-Video.

Nothing Sacred

1937. B&W. Carole Lombard, Fredric March; dir. William Wellman. Another Ben Hecht treat: Reporter exploits small-town girl's imminent death. With shorts *Campus Vamp* and *Matchmaking Mama*, plus home movies of Lombard and husband Clark Gable. Mono. (NR) 75 min. plus supplements. LD \$39.95. Lumivision (800-776-LUMI).

On Moonlight Bay

1951. Doris Day, Gordon MacRae; dir. Roy del Ruth. A turn-of-the-century musical romance, chock full of the standards, for sentimental fools (like myself). Also released: the 1953 sequel, *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*. Mono. (NR) 95 min. VHS, Beta \$59.99. Warner.

Pavarotti & Friends

1993. The "friends" include Sting, Zucchero, Bob Geldof, Lucio Dalla and Suzanne Vega, in a charity concert from Pavarotti's Italian hometown of Modena. Stereo. 70 min. VHS \$29.95. LD \$34.95. PolyGram.

Pride and Prejudice

1940. B&W. Greer Garson, Laurence Olivier, Mary Boland, Edmund Gwenn; dir. Robert Z. Leonard. Sparkling tale of five sisters in need of five eligible gentlemen (in possession of a large fortune). Mono. (NR) 118 min. LD \$34.98. MGM/UA.

Swoon

1992. B&W. Daniel Schachet, Craig Chester; dir. Tom Kalin. Stylish, acclaimed first outing for director Tom Kalin recounts the Leopold and Loeb story. Stereo. (NR) 95 min. VHS priced for rental. LD \$39.99. New Line.

Twin Peaks: The First Season

1990-91. A must-have: The first seven episodes, introducing prime-time's most popular corpse, Laura Palmer. Surround. (NR) 334 min. LD \$124.98. Worldvision.

COMEDY

BabyCakes

1989. Ricki Lake, Craig Sheffer; dir. Paul Schneider. *Hairspray* heroine homes in on

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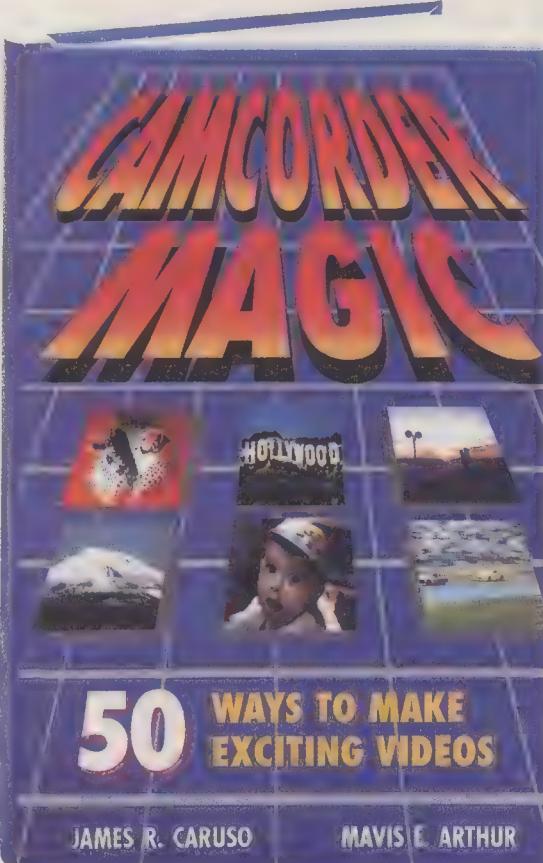
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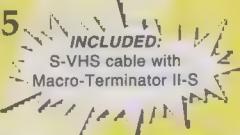
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hunk. Stereo, cc. (M: Mature) 94 min. VHS only, \$89.98. Turner.

Eating

1990. Nelly Alard, Frances Bergen, Mary Crosby; wr./dir. Henry Jaglom. Revealing look at what women are talking about. Mono, cc. (R) 110 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. LD \$34.95. Paramount.

Julia Misbehaves

1949. B&W. Elizabeth Taylor, Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Peter Lawford, Mary Boland; dir. Jack Conway. One of a new batch of Liz's flicks — along with *The VIP's* and *Beau Brummell* — from MGM/UA. Divorced couple reunited for daughter's wedding. Mono. (NR) 99 min. VHS, Beta \$19.98. MGM/UA.

LASERDISCS

American Art From the National Gallery

1992. Still-frame extravaganza, with Mary Cassatt, Jackson Pollock and many more — in fact, more than 2,600 pieces are included. Mono. \$99.95. Voyager.

Beneath the 12-Mile Reef

1953. Robert Wagner, Gilbert Roland; dir. Robert D. Webb. Early CinemaScope — and an even earlier Robert Wagner. Stereo, letterboxed. (NR) 102 min. \$34.95. Lumivision (800-776-LUMI).

Dangerous Liaisons

1960. B&W. Jeanne Moreau, Gerard Philippe; dir. Roger Vadim. The 18th-century novel, jazzed up (with Thelonious Monk and Duke Jordan) and modernized. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 108 min. \$49.99. Interama. ■

RECEIVER

continued from page 64

THE ONKYO TS-XV515PRO

This inexpensive receiver proved a pleasant surprise on Pro-Logic — it handled the Wow disc intro well, and never disappointed us on difficult decoding tasks like the plane chase from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Voices were a bit edgy and metallic, but not to the point where it really bothered us.

Of course, at less than half the price of the other receivers, you have to give up something — in this case, music sound. The little Onkyo sounded a bit rough around the edges on two-channel music, easily bested by all the more expensive receivers. However, its single music surround mode helped things, adding a welcome sense of space.

The remote control can't be programmed to operate other gear — only other Onkyo equipment. And unfortunately, there are no S-video inputs. If you're mainly interested in Pro-Logic sound, the TS-XV515PRO will probably give you all the sound and features you need at a bargain price. But if you want full features and top-notch power and performance, you're better off with one of the more expensive receivers. ■

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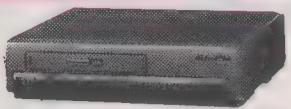


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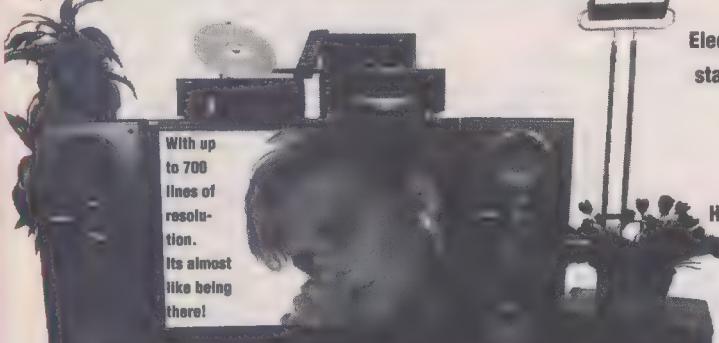
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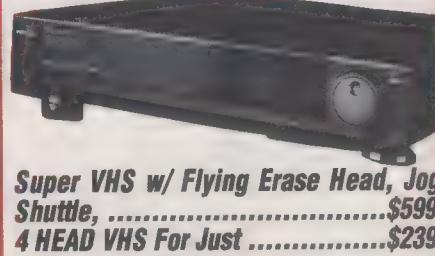


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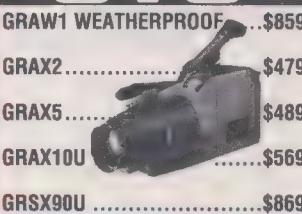
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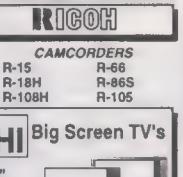
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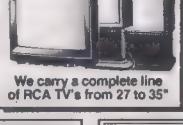
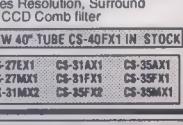
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SYSTEMS

continued from page 49

cal projectors available. Its screen is large enough to make a dramatic impact, especially in apartment settings, and apartment dwellers will appreciate the set's shallow 27-inch depth. When cost is measured against performance, the speaker series from DCM Corp. is a tough lineup to beat. The smallest of DCM's floor-standing TimeFrame speakers, the TF-400, can be matched with three of its CX07 speakers and the SUB-712 subwoofer to create a potent theater package that's also exceptionally musical.

THEATER 3: SOMETHING WILD

It's time to make the leap into home theater with eye-popping proportions. This is where front-screen projection comes in, to transform the rolling seas in *The Hunt for Red October* into room-size swells extending 84 inches from corner to corner. This is the world of two-piece television.

Front projectors aren't cheap, but since we're working with a budget of \$12,000, you'll still be standing on solid ground by allocating \$6,700 for Pulsar's Prodigy Excel. That's the price with a TV tuner built in, and we might as well go for it. Pulsar doesn't have the high profile of some other brands, but what it can do with a fine laserdisc leaves little to be wished for.

The projection screen is critical. Although you can simply project the image onto a white wall, a properly reflective screen will brighten your picture, assure the widest possible viewing angle and eliminate hot spots where brightness intensifies to a glare. A so-called double-curved screen boosts brightness evenly and affords vivid images even in daylight. The drawback is that the screen is always there.

That's why I prefer a motorized flat screen, also known as a drop screen. When the lights come up, the screen scrolls up and out of sight. Since a flat screen doesn't produce the high contrast of a double-curved screen, using one may require window treatments to ensure a darkened room. This makes it less than ideal for casual viewing situations in which your spouse would rather read while you watch. But a well-designed drop screen can make your living room look better than the Bijou. A good model to consider is Da-Lite's seven-foot, "pearlescent" coated Design Da-Tab Electrol, for \$2,163.

With \$12,000 to spend, there's little

need to agonize over the electronics. Yamaha's flagship RX-V1070 receiver, with digitally souped-up Dolby Pro-Logic and beefy amplifiers (110 watts across the front), is my big-time pick. For video sources, I'll start with Pioneer CLD-D502, the successor to the CLD-D501, and add my favorite VCR, Mitsubishi's S-VHS HS-U67, a model of user friendliness and a stellar performer.

Allowing for a conservative 10 percent discount lets us take advantage of Acoustic Research's well-tailored line to assemble a surround sound array that matches up well with the Yamaha receiver. For front stereo, I recommend a pair of Model 4.5 speakers. These small, floor-standing units can handle the bottom end handily enough to spare the need for a subwoofer. For the center channel, there's the MC.1, and for ambience, the diminutive bookshelf M.5.

SYSTEM 3 VARIATION

Of course, some people just don't like front projectors, usually because of their sensitivity to room light. Or you may not have room for a seven-foot screen. Or you may just prefer the picture quality in a first-class rear-screen projector. For any of these reasons, especially the latter, Pioneer's 55-inch Elite Pro106 is an excellent alternative.

While we're revamping, let's replace our standard receiver and speakers with a complete THX package, electronics and speakers together. Until recently, this would have consumed our entire budget and then some. But Kenwood has come up with an integrated set of THX-approved electronics — processor and amplifiers — for \$2,000. Meanwhile, Altec Lansing has introduced a complete THX speaker system for \$3,000. So for five grand you can hear *The Abyss* in minutely proportioned suboceanic surround, exactly as intended.

As a laserdisc alternative, consider Marantz's LV-500, a high-performance design that lets you black out the TV screen (and the machine's front display) for a more cinematic experience.

Let's use what's left in our budget to augment the THX array with speakers to be used strictly for music. Our choice for this task is AR's slim, floor-standing M6 speakers. At \$1,200 a pair, the M6 is the most satisfying speaker I've heard, top to bottom, anywhere near the price. Kenwood's 100-watt-per-channel THX amp should deliver power aplenty.

A great home theater system adds tremendous flexibility to home entertainment. The three ways we've shown to make home theater equipment work for you should help take some of the confusion out of mixing and matching components and serve as a starting point for customizing your own system. ■

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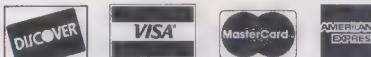
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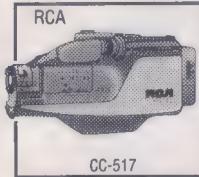
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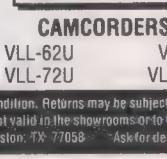
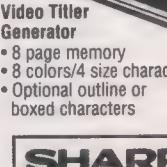
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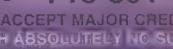
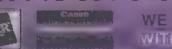
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ISLAND

continued from page 51

35mm film — period. But the best special-edition discs actually *beat* the theatrical experience by giving you enhanced ways to watch great movies. There's no more indispensable example than this CAV edition, which intercuts finished, full-color shots with rough, pencil-sketch footage. But the biggest advantage over a cineplex screening is that you can slow down the complex action, taking it in frame by overstuffed frame. The opening number alone, with Belle strolling through town engrossed in a book, shows dozens of citizens haggling with merchants in the background. Their mundane concerns explain Belle's detachment, and you can't catch it all without CAV freeze-framing.

Raging Bull (Criterion CAV edition). The equally rich spectacle of a real-life beast, boxer Jake LaMotta, makes this another must-have laserdisc. Director Martin Scorsese and editor Thelma Schoonmaker offer rapid-fire analog-track commentary, while still-frame script excerpts give a fascinating counterpunch to the finished dialog.

The Godfather Trilogy, 1901-1908 (Paramount). You can't refuse this boxed set as a cornerstone of any laserdisc collection. Only home video could accommodate this 10-hour, chronological re-edit of Francis Coppola's gangster epic, and only laser lets you chapter-skip instantly to your favorite Corleone year.

RUNNERS-UP:

Bye Bye Birdie
(Pioneer Special Editions)

Manhattan (MGM/UA)

Mr. Hulot's Holiday (Criterion)

Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (Criterion)

It's a Wonderful Life
45th-Anniversary Edition
(Republic)

BRUCE EDER, Contributing Editor

The House on Haunted Hill/Attack of the 50-Foot Woman (CBS/Fox). This double bill covers the low-rent and sub-basement levels of 1950s horror. Each film is a delightful expression of societal fears clothed in cheap, jokey thrills unequaled before Joe Dante's recent *Matinee*. The disc presents both in the best condition we're likely to see, and the added resolution makes for more fun by revealing the corners cut in their production.

Blade Runner (Criterion). In its original release form, *Blade Runner* is a

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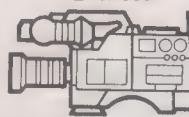
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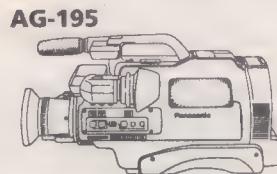
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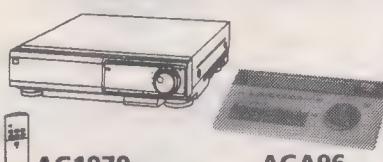


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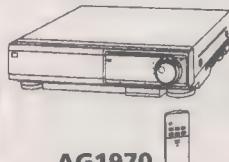
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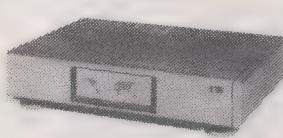
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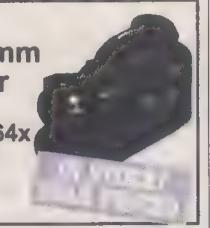
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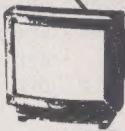
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OFF THE AIR

Is HDTV doomed? Smoked? Kaput?

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Teen-agers won't, but for aging baby boomers like myself, watching *2001: A Space Odyssey* reinvent the look of the universe across an immense curved screen made for an unforgettable trip to the movies. That was at the tail end of the '60s when a chain of Cinerama theaters would soon, we were promised, revolutionize moviegoing with giant panoramic epics so dazzling they had to be shot with three cameras lashed together. Everybody loved Cinerama, except the paying public. After years of great expectations and a season of pizzazz, Cinerama withered, leaving the future of movie theaters to multiplexing, which offered pretty much Cinerama's opposite — more movies on smaller screens.

Is history about to repeat itself? Now, 25 years later, in an era steeped in video, is a grand vision of television's future about to be overtaken, as was Cinerama, by more pragmatic technology? Is HDTV dead? Doomed before it's done? Kaput? Smoked? Finished? Ready to be put on the shelf before it's put into stores?

The short answer is no, of course not.

High-definition television's alive and kicking. Just look at the blue-chip lineup of companies behind it, and the action in Washington where four systems are fighting for a national franchise. How can it be dead? For most people, HDTV's yet to be born. But a more realistic answer would acknowledge there are reasons to feel anxious.

Some of the reasons are in Washington, where the new information order is more committed than ever to high-tech enterprises, but no longer quite so wedded to HDTV as its centerpiece. Alfred Sikes' departure as chief of the Federal

Communications Commission ended his daring campaign to regulate HDTV into existence within the next two decades. With Sikes gone, the FCC's effort to find an ideal HDTV system for the country has yielded a preliminary, inconclusive report. At press time, the HDTV contestants were feuding about how the competition should proceed or whether they should, somehow, merge their systems into one.

Meanwhile, projects that make HDTV seem less urgent are barreling ahead. Cable companies, phone companies, computer companies, even former defense companies are scrambling to pave the "data superhighway" that is

powerful players. They see millions going into costly HDTV components, but precious little income coming their way to pay back the investment. At a recent conference of entertainment executives and investors sponsored by Wertheim Schroder and *Variety*, HDTV was hardly mentioned. "Profound changes are coming in the next few years," said Wertheim Schroder's managing director David Londoner, as he described the critical issues confronting the TV and cable industries. They included interactivity, the cost of 500-channel upgrades and competition with phone and satellite companies developing new services — but not HDTV.

Cost will also be a vital issue to viewers, who will be expected to fork over big bucks for HDTV sets. Yet by the time they show up in stores, HDTV sets will no longer have an exclusive on what some studies identify as the technology's most attractive feature — a wide aspect ratio. This year's new widescreen TV sets will show viewers that they need not wait for HDTV to enjoy 16:9 pictures at home and that, in coming years, they won't have to buy HDTVs to enjoy wide-screen pictures.

HDTV has been on the drawing boards in one form or another for more than 20 years. It's long been available in limited amounts in Japan and Europe, where sets are forbiddingly expensive. Analog versions of HDTV are already considered obsolete. A few years ago, HDTV promised to be the technological engine that would transform television in the '90s. That's no longer the case.

The field is crowding with alternatives, and the competition's fiercer. HDTV's still in the running for a share of TV's future. But it had better hurry up. Something's gaining.



so much on Washington's mind. In search of lucrative new markets, they're planning to pave it with hundreds of extra channels and dozens of fresh types of programs. In this environment, a high-definition picture may become just one among many new video services. If we want to watch a movie in a high-definition mode, we'll pay extra, but we certainly won't watch everything in high-definition.

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